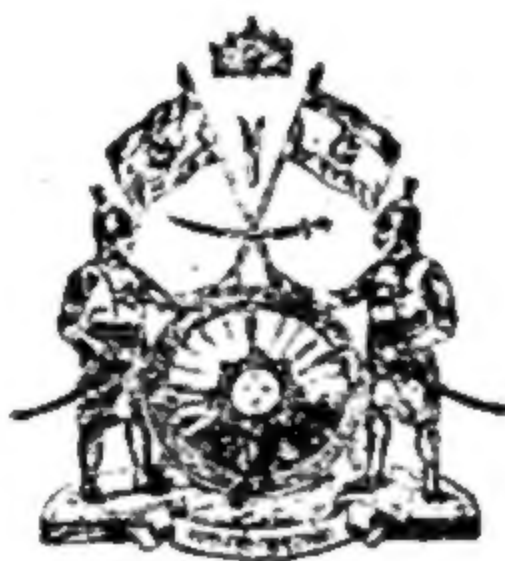




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FRAGMENTS OF A PRISONER'S DIARY

VOL. I

# THE MEMOIRS OF A CAT

BY

M. N. ROY

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## PREFACE

This is not an essay on autobiography. I have a strong dislike for the idea of writing one's own history, be it mental or physical. History is a science. Critically composed biographies have a place in historical literature. Autobiographies, however, are worthless as historical records. The incentive to write an autobiography is supplied by egoism—by the belief in one's own importance. Only people, obsessed with the idea that they are destined to play historical roles, write autobiographies. The inevitable results of that underlying motive can be counter-balanced only by an extraordinarily high degree of self-criticism. The two cannot naturally go together. One cannot be egoistic and self-critical, at the same time. Autobiographies are worth reading only as works of fine literature. Very few of them, however, can measure up to that standard. For these considerations, I have never been inclined to record the events of my life or to trace the development of my mind.

This work is a mere collection of random notes and reflections at odd moments. In prison, particularly when the term is long and the confinement solitary, one has plenty of time to kill. The killing of time takes place in different ways, according to the temperament and inclination of different people. Soon after I was lodged in the Bareilly Central Jail, a small kitten one day strayed into my room. I gave



it some milk, and it stayed on. In course of the scientific studies I was doing at that time, I was interested in animal psychology. Animal psychology can be studied only on the basis of the principles of behaviourism. In odd moments, I used to observe how the cat behaved in different circumstances, and reflect what might be the mental process behind its psychological behaviours. Thus begun, the reflections recorded in the following pages, however, did not remain limited to strictly scientific observations. In moments of relaxation, one thought leads to another, and the chain may be prolonged at random to touch an endless variety of subjects. I thought, for future reference, a record of those thought-processes set off by the observation of this or that phenomenon, not selected, neither isolated, for the purpose of any strictly scientific study, could be kept usefully. The result was more or less long, more or less systematic, more or less complete, more or less serious, random writings which are now being published as the fragments of a prisoner's diary. They will be divided into three volumes, this being the first. The other two will be "The Ideal of Indian Womanhood" and "Letters From Prison".

This book is incomplete in a sense. Originally, I did plan to record the events in the life of my cat, of course as long as we would be together in jail. Six years was long enough to plan ahead. But the work was interrupted by my transfer to a different jail. The cat, of course, was not transferred. It lived in jail, but it was not a prisoner. In the absence of its subject, the biography of the cat could no longer be continued. The reflections, being very largely

imaginary, could be continued even then. But the incentive was not there. Moreover, the transfer to a different jail placed me in conditions more favourable for serious scientific work. Consequently, the "Memoirs of a Cat" remained incomplete as a piece of history of questionable value. But the observations made therein are self-contained, and, though done in a light vein, are meant to provoke thought. I hope that that purpose will be served by the publication of this small volume.

Dehra Dun, October 1940.

M. N. ROY





## JUSTIFICATION

**W**ELL, ladies and gentlemen, don't be disdainful and be simply amused by this unprecedented event in the annals of literature. Whoever has heard of a cat telling the world the story of her life! And a common, plebeian, so-to-say, cat at that. Worse still; a "criminal" cat—by parentage. But to this highly interesting, in the sociological sense, part of my story I shall come by and by. I know you are intrigued; in spite of the apparently amused disdain at this feline venture into literature, you are curious to hear the story. And, be sure, you won't be disappointed. It is going to be an instructive, if not a fascinating story. You see, I am not altogether unequipped for the task. I have a not too modest opinion of myself. Lack of modesty is a condition for success in literary venture. If writers were handicapped with this virtue, perhaps many of the dubiously bright lights in the firmament of literature would never shine. There are cynics who would mutter with grim humour, "That might not have been such a great misfortune". Though not an admirer of cynicism, by which I mean the temperament that results from either a faulty or too good a digestion, I am nevertheless inclined to agree with the cynic on this particular point. Frankly speaking, except in the terms of profit, made by those engaged in the printing and publishing business, it would be difficult to account for

the meteoric appearance of many literary phenomena, including not a few best-sellers. In my humble opinion, the measure of a true advance in literature should be not the number of writers, but of readers. For this opinion, I am likely to be suspected of cattishness. But I am, after all, a cat. One cannot go away from one's shadow.

It appears rather odd, doesn't it? that, with this cattish reflection upon the numerous devotees of the fair Goddess Saraswati, I should be going to join their ranks, and increase the number of useless books in the world. But you don't expect a poor uneducated cat to be logical. A literary cat is bad enough; a rational cat would be simply insufferable. I naturally don't wish to tax the indulgence of the reader too much in the very beginning.

Let me return to the point from which I have wandered away, just like a cat. I was going to explain why I did not plunge into my story right away. The reason is some diffidence on my part. I believe it is necessary to justify this unusual venture. How could a cat come to take it for granted that the story of its life would interest human readers? This question might be disposed off simply by the retort: Well, why not? That would be, in my opinion, quite a pertinent answer to what appears to me to be a rather impertinent question. But I am not overbearing. On the contrary, as mentioned above, it is with some hesitation that I am going to tell my story.

I have had occasions to observe men from close quarters. It may be pointed out incidentally that,

having passed my short life in a prison, I have never come in contact with human beings of my sex. But I dare say that in many respects, particularly of the biological nature, they feel and act much as I do myself. In addition to my personal experience, I can count upon the accumulated experience of my whole species. Although cats are never really domesticated, in the sense of being enslaved, yet, with their spit-fire nature, partially preserved against selfish human affection, my kind have acquired access to that intimate corner of human existence where all put-up appearances fall away.

We haunt the hearth and home, and therefore enjoy the uncommon opportunity of finding out man in his true nature. Unfortunately, I have not lived in human home; but prison is also an interesting place. Here also the beast in man creeps out of his human skin; and one, with a keen power of cynical observation, possessed by my species, encounters all sorts of amusing and illuminating mental phenomena. Besides, I have inherited the highly developed cynicism and studied indifference which characterise our species because we know too much. Having been taken aback by the incredible amount of human ignorance, I have come to the conclusion, after months and months of calm reflection, that it would be selfish of me to hold back the treasure of knowledge we possess. This literary curiosity is the concrete form of that altruistic conclusion.

Now, mine is not going to be a pleasant task. Necessarily, I shall have to confront man with the

naked picture of himself. I shall be obliged to disregard the advice of the shrewd Indian *rishis*, namely, "*satyam bruyat, priyam bruyat, ma bruyat satyamapriyam*" (tell the truth, but tell pleasant things; don't tell unpleasant truths). Should I be bound by this time-honoured adage, then, my literary adventure might be a success; the first autobiography of a cat might be indulgently received; it might even become a best-seller, provided that the unpleasant truths left unsaid are compensated by pleasing falsehoods, loudly proclaimed as revealed truth. But in that case, my personal triumph would be bought at the cost of public benefit. Since in this literary venture I am moved by an altruistic motive, I propose to be selfless all the way through. I shall be running counter to the instinctive wisdom of my species which is notorious for selfishness. I have my full share of this invaluable heritage. I am fully self-willed as befits a normal cat. As a matter of fact, for reasons to be stated by and by, I am more cynical, distrustful and indifferent than the average member of my race, and I delight in my perversity. But once I have assumed the role of an altruistic truth-teller, I am going to discharge it with grim determination.

The next problem I have to solve is regarding the most effective way of performing my mission. As regards the mission itself, I, of course, take it for granted. How often have I heard that India has a mission to save the world! I, being also a part of India, may naturally claim a share in that mission, although I have not the slightest idea what it really is. But pondering over the riddle at leisure, which I



have in plenty, I have hit upon a solution, quite satisfactory—to myself. Whatever may be the nature of India's mission, the Indians should first of all equip themselves to perform it. I believe that I should be performing my inalienable share of India's world mission, if I reminded the chosen people of God of the fundamental teaching of their philosophy, namely, "Know Thyself". This is not exactly the Indian scriptural text. I am afraid, it has a Hellenic flavour. But I have heard it said most authoritatively that the old Greeks themselves learned from India whatever little they knew. In any case, to stress the point that one must know oneself, in order to ascertain if he is fit for the mission given to him by God, is the only practical application of the basic principle of Hindu philosophy, that "*atmajnan*" (knowledge of one's own self) is the highest ideal of human life.

It would, of course, be amazing impudence on the part of a poor illiterate cat to sermonise those who are superior to her, at least in the biological sense. I might be tempted to commit the act of insolence, if I allowed myself to be influenced by, for example, Bergson's interpretation of organic evolution. In his opinion, human organism is not to be regarded as the highest product of the process of natural selection; on the contrary, he holds, it is indeed a deteriorated biological form. To drive his point home, the venerable dean of contemporary philosophy points out how unfavourably human organism compares, for example, with the elephantine or apine.

I don't see any valid reason why the tiger, not to mention the lion, should not be added to the list of



animals that can claim superiority to man, on such high an authority. And the obviously unchallengeable right of the tiger is shared also by his aunt, which distinction belongs to the cat. Thus, if I chose to, I could justifiably lecture man. The superiority of the wisdom of the elders is traditionally admitted by the Indian social and domestic ethics. As a matter of fact, I am rather young, a little over a year old at this writing. But, as I have mentioned already, I represent the accumulated wisdom of my race.

Besides, just as a Brahmin is a Brahmin, just so is an aunt an aunt; age does not matter. Social privileges are due to the Brahmin traditionally. You must bow before the Brahmin even if he is illiterate or a scoundrel. He is a Brahmin nonetheless, and as such deserves the respect of all others placed lower to him in the social scale by Providential Ordinance, as the Gita teaches. Domestic relations are no less providentially arranged than social stratifications. Both are equally immutable. Just think of the Indians not implicitly following the path travelled by their forefathers in the light of revealed wisdom! What would happen as a result of such disregard for venerable traditions? The noble heritage of ignorance, prejudice, superstition would all go by the board. India would be denationalised.

If established rules were not implicitly obeyed, the venerable social structure of India would break down; and there would be no ideal for the divinely ordained reconstruction of the world. The spiritual culture of India places abstract concepts which, if I may have the impertinence to point out, have become

sanctified superstitions; it has no respect for the concrete. These are illusions, irrelevant at any rate. Therefore, it is frivolous, or imitating the materialistic West, to test the wisdom of our elders by any concrete standard. The elder is wiser; nor should elderliness be judged by the actual number of years. Respect for abstract standards does not permit such hair-splitting. What are a few years? They may have some significance in relation to the bodily existence. But soul is eternal. It has no age. An aunt may be young, ridiculously so, as a body; but as a soul, that is, as her real self, she must enjoy the full privilege of auntness. And wisdom superior to that of the nephews and nieces is an abstract, absolute, and inalienable attribute of auntness. Auntness! Really, by discovering this abstract idea, I am making some original contribution to philosophy. As far as my cattish information goes, the inventor of "Abstract Ideas", I mean Plato, did not conceive of it together with such brilliant specimens as horseness, appleness, treeness, so on and so forth.

Notwithstanding all these overwhelmingly convincing reasons, I forego the right to lecture human beings who are inferior to my magnificent nephew, the tiger. I have chosen a simpler, less offensive, but more effective, way of performing my mission—of contributing my share to the achievement of India's world mission. The way chosen is to tell the otherwise meaningless story of my life, lived among men, and therefore correctly reflecting them as they really are in their day to day existence. My record will be candid and courageous. I shall depict men, who have had any relation with my insignificant existence,

just as I have found them to be. Naturally, mine will not be a dispassionate narrative. I am not going to compose an essay on myself. I am going to record the incidents of my life.

Passion is the sign of life. To be passionless, is to be lifeless. If I did not live, there would be no story to tell. Anybody who proposes to write an autobiography dispassionately is to be pitied for self-deception. It is lying to one's own self. What is life but a sum total of hunger, love, hatred, anger, kindness? My relation with men has been determined by one or the other of such passions. My judgment of a man could not be humanly (if I may borrow the term) free from harshness, if he treated me unkindly when I was hungry. And such treatment reveals the real character of man. Having had the opportunity of observing man in his unguarded moments, and in conditions of jail life which force the beast in man to show its teeth, I claim my judgment to be objective. But objectivity does not exclude passion. Objectivity simply means correspondence with reality; and passion is the basic reality of life.

I justify my undertaking on the authority of one of the most successful scribes of our time. I mean, Bernard Shaw. I start with a similar modesty, and expect to be more successful. I expect to succeed not as an artist, but as a social critic. Literary talent contributed to Shaw's melancholy failure in the mission he undertook in youth. I have no handicap. Therefore, I can be confident of success in that respect. What I say will predominate how I say it.

More than forty years ago, the young Shaw

wrote the following in the preface of his "Plays Unpleasant": "But in claiming place for my plays among works of art, I must make a melancholy reservation. One or two friendly readers may find it interesting, amusing, even admirable, as far as a mere topical farce can excite admiration; but nobody will find it a beautiful or a loveable work. It is saturated with vulgarity of the life it represents; the people do not speak nobly, live gracefully, or sincerely face their own positions; the author is not giving expression in pleasant fancies to the underlying beauty and romance of happy life, but dragging up to the smooth surface of 'respectability' a handful of the slime and foulness of its polluted bed, playing off your laughter at the scandal of the exposure against your shudder at the blackness. It is not my fault, reader, if my art is the expression of my sense of moral or intellectual perversity rather than of my sense of beauty".

A little above, I asked, as to why a cat should not tell the story of her life, and why it should not interest human readers. Evidently, I believe that a member of my race is fully entitled to record the events of his or her life, and that human beings may read such stories with benefit to themselves. Presumably, this statement would be hotly disputed—by human vanity. But that vanity should be tempered by the knowledge of the very insignificant place man occupies in the grand scheme of the Universe. When man knows that he is a tiny bit of carbon crawling on a speck of cosmic dust, he should be ashamed of his vanity.

Heliocentric astronomy, revived by Copernicus, dealt the first blow to human vanity. Modern astral



physics has degraded the entire solar system to the insignificance of a "freak". If man were the special creation of God, or the finite form of the Infinite (as the Vedantist would prefer to say), why is he placed in such a humiliating position? The physical Universe, with myriads of stars of which our sun is a very ordinary one, and thousands of millions of star-galaxies, is not a gigantic stage set for the man to strut about. The phenomenon of life, particularly in the form of human ego-centrism, is not the cream of the cosmic scheme. It is rather a blemish in the magnificent harmony of things. I am a part of this blemish, just as much as is Rabindranath Tagore or Edgar Wallace. Indeed, the discredit belongs equally to every bit of crawling protoplasm.

All forms of higher life—man, monkey, horse, dog, cat, bat, to name only a few—grow each out of an egg which is absolutely uniform in all cases. The one of my origin was a tiny lump of primal slime. Great writers also have been hatched out of similar lumps of protoplasm. Nor does the uniformity stop there. It can be traced up to a much later stage of organic evolution. If you compare myself in embryo, that is when I was less than two months old in the mother's womb, with the greatest human scribe in the same condition, one could not be distinguished from the other. The father's contribution was just the same in either case—one sperm, microscopically small but of albumen formed like a diminutive tadpole. Also in both the cases, the mother supplied the identically constructed egg to be fertilised by the sperm. The body of this poor cat as well as of the great man evolved out of that identically insignifi-

cant, and what is more important, accidental, beginning, to the specific morphological state of its birth. In either instances, it thrived as a parasite on the maternal organism. What the mother contributed, she in her turn got from the sun as chlorophyl. Since we entered into the independent existence on earth, we derived our sustenance, composed of identical substances, from solar radiation. Not only the imposing body of the great man, but also his supposedly superior brain, indeed the entire wealth of extraordinary "spiritual" qualities he is credulously credited with, have absolutely no other mysterious foundation than the accidental combination of the fatherly sperm with the motherly egg, and chemical compounds (mostly carbon) produced from the sun. Just the same is the case with me. The utter groundlessness of human vanity is revealed in the light of these incontestable biological facts.

Anatomically, my modest frame (I am very proud of it) stands scientific comparison with the skeleton that supports the lofty stature of any man believed to be possessed of super-human powers or divine qualities. Examine the two, bone for bone, joint for joint, and you will be surprised to see how very little qualitative difference there is. Even morphologically, that is, in the form of structure, the noble biped is but little differentiated from his lowly cousins who still prefer to walk securely on all fours. Carry the comparison further, and I shall not be in a much greater disadvantage. Take, for example, my brain, unless you are foolish enough to laugh at the idea of a cat claiming to have brain, in the figurative sense, for physically you can hardly deny me one.



Yes, take, for instance, brain—the climax of organic evolution; I mean, climax as a part of the physical process, not its by-product. Place the modest lump of the clammy stuff lodged behind my shamefully receding forehead, by the side of the spiritual dynamo in the noble cranium of a genius, who is naturally a man. Ask an expert physiologist to have a look at both. Except for the possible difference in bulk, he might have insuperable difficulty to identify them with their respective owners. So, you see, it is not altogether excluded biologically that a cat should be what you call a genius. How do you know that I am not one? You may now realise the force of my question —“Why not?”—with which I retorted the possible question meant to ridicule my literary ambition.

At this stage of the defence of my intrusion in the temple of Saraswati, hitherto reserved for man, still another embarrassing question has to be answered. If the quadruped cousins of man are not theoretically excluded from the biological equipments of a genius, how can the utter absence of any manifestation be explained? Well, I am not caught unawares. The question is easily answered, although it is rather irrelevant. Some knowledge of the theory of relativity, which, transcending its native sphere of physics, is bound to revolutionise the entire human ideology (Vedantists, beware of the danger!), should discourage such naive questions. You cannot interpolate human standards in our world. Because, a cat or a dog or a monkey has never been guilty of the bad manners and disgusting traits of character that are associated with the so-called great men, you jump to the conclusion that there has been no manifestation

of genius in the history of the races of non-human animals.

Man is so limited intellectually that he is utterly incapable of understanding anything unless expressed in the system of phonetics called human language. His egocentrism quite amazingly and illogically has made a virtue out of this really humiliating restriction upon his power of expression and understanding. He stakes his claim to superiority on the doubtful ground that the power of articulated speech marks him out as a special creation of his God. I say, *his* God, because his God, being made by himself after his own image, must be a human God, utterly incapable of having any mutual understanding with the rest of the organic forms evolved out of the primeval slime. We, naturally, have no use for such God. Our God must be of our kind. A nice, swaggering tom cat, for example, is the ideal object of adoration and worship for a young pretty thing like myself. (By the way, did I mention my sex?) Being an Indian she-cat, I, of course, have inherited the most outstanding and lyrically praised characteristics of Aryan womanhood. The male being, to whom she happens to be hitched on, is the God incarnate for the female. This is not particularly an Indian principle; for, essentially, this idealised code of female conduct is based upon a carnal, and therefore natural, desire. I share this habit of the female to worship the male: because it is the sublimated super-structure of a biological urge which is the only convincing expression of divine purpose, if one is to make such an assumption to make up for human ignorance. But let me not digress. I shall deal with this highly interesting,

but, in my opinion, stupid topic, in connection with other incidents of my life.

To return to the question of the power of articulated speech. Indisputably, that is a speciality, I should say, peculiarity, of the species which perversely finds it more convenient to balance precariously on two pins than to be in the more comfortable, and therefore natural, posture of resting squarely on all fours, given by God. The creator attached four elongated limbs to the body of higher animals, so that they could carry the burden easily until they are called upon to lay it down. Some of them suddenly took it into their head to interfere with the providential arrangement, owing to the selfish desire for climbing up the trees, so that the juicy fruits might be available to their lust and they might have a generally more advantageous position. Having violated providential arrangement for carnal and selfish motives, the impious but intrepid pioneers of the human race got scared at their own temerity. To placate the displeased God, they made him over after their own image—only with two legs.

My literary ambition has not yet gone to the extent of undertaking the very necessary criticism of the scriptural epics. But I might just as well suggest incidentally that the cult of worshipping Hanuman may be a form of the ancestor-worship, current among primitive people. If one followed up this suggestion, two diametrically opposite conclusions might be reached, each according to the preoccupation of the investigator. Those, preoccupied with the zeal to establish the thesis that the most modern

achievements of science were made thousands or even tens of thousands of years ago in India, would triumphantly point out that Darwinism was known to the composer of the *Ramayan*; but the opposite conclusion, logically to be drawn parallel to the one testifying to India's unsurpassed and unsurpassable greatness, would be a disconcerting anti-climax. It would be that the India of the *Ramayan* was inhabited by savages given to ancestor-worship. The juxtaposition of a climax and anti-climax would necessarily raise the question, how is it possible for a people to be highly civilised and savage at the same time? The answer to the question can not be given speculatively; it must come out of a scientific investigation of the historical value of the Epics.

The differentiation from the rest of the animal world, due to the development of the power of articulated speech, has not been an unmixed blessing for man. The power led to progressive coherence of the human species, which thus set out on the process of social evolution. But that process was in a tangent from the animal world as a whole. Having thus strayed away from his native home, man lost the ability to understand the majority of the population to which he biologically belongs. He thinks that he has ceased to be animal; and certainly has forfeited the super-human (you might say, sub-human, let us therefore compromise on the more comprehensive term: extra-human) attributes that belong to the animal. To be different is not necessarily to be superior. Man says that he has lived down his animal self. I wonder if he really has. Biology certainly does not justify the pretension. Modern psychology



has scant respect for the vanity of man. Psychoanalysis, for example, demonstrates, cruelly and rather cynically, that human behaviour, base as well as noble, is determined by purely animal motives.

Well, all these are man's own concern. I refer to them now in brief, and shall treat them later in detail, because they have contributed so much to the bitterness of my life. But the point I wish to make at this stage is that man is utterly unable to understand even those animals who are only his first, second or third cousins. Take, for example, the horse, an animal supposed to be loved, cherished and understood by man. But ask the horse; he may have something different to say. Has any man ever even thought of taking the opinion of the horse before writing lyrically about the faithfulness of that noble animal? That is just human—to judge the world by his own primitive standard. Anyone that is useful to him, is praised. Man's love for the horse is but the love for himself. If anyone really loved his horse, could he practise the brutality of making the beloved animal run with the loving master sitting proudly on his back? Or make him or her run races, often at the risk of limbs and life, so that the owner may acquire the distinction of having won some coveted trophy? It may be asked, why then do the horses appear to be pleased at the cruelties and humiliation they are subjected to by their loving masters? Well, you may just as well ask the German people as to why they all enthusiastically voted for Hitler, whose declared object is to degrade an enlightened nation to mediaeval barbarism. The German people as well as the pampered horses would very likely

give the puzzling reply: Do we, really? The one submits no more enthusiastically to the loving cruelties of the master than the other goose-steps at the noisy strain of brass bands and give the Roman salute exclaiming: Heil Hitler! In both the cases, it begins with coercion, and continues as slavish habit which, however, ill conceals the underlying resentment.

My point is that man domesticates animals for his selfish motive. The Hindu worships the cow with no nobler purpose. I have blundered upon a ticklish question; so, I may just as well avail of my blundering for saying a few words about it.

The quaint custom of cow-worship has been rationalised by the modern Hindu intellectual. It has been appreciated even by critical people as the picturesque expression of a noble sentiment. I do not propose to enter into any controversy. I only desire to suggest that one should approach the subject from the point of view of an actual problem and practical necessity. All progressive Indians, particularly those with nationalist inclinations (progressiveness and nationalism are not inseparable), agree that Hindu-Muslim unity is a condition for the social and national advancement of the Indian people. But how many of them have seriously and critically tried to ascertain the concrete obstacles to the much desired unity?

Apart from historical causes of indirect nature, which are not spontaneously operative as far as the large bulk of the population is concerned, the main bone of contention is the cow. It would be difficult to find any other single direct cause which contributes



more to the communal tension. I should not be accused of extravagance if I said that the choice before the Hindu to-day is between the venerable custom of worshipping the *Gomata* and continued national subjugation. Looked at from this point of view, cow-worship does not appear to be a typically Indian expression of idealism; it is found to be a stout link in the chain of national slavery.

All antiquated social institutions and religious prejudices have the same sinister significance; and cow-worship is a superstition. Instead of misapplying their intelligence to the task of rationalising institutions which have lost all social usefulness, young Indians should develop the faculty of criticism.

Let us dwell a little longer on this very familiar topic of cow-worship. No rational man would maintain that there is really any particular godliness in this particular animal. If it were really a question of seeing the World Soul in every form of life, why did the *Rishis* pick out one particular species to be the object of their pantheistic devotion? When the typical Hindu attitude towards animals is observed, little of pantheism is detected. I happen to know it from personal experience. The old-fashioned Hindu has a strong antipathy for my race; and the greater the orthodoxy, that is religiosity, the greater the antipathy. The best part of my short life has been lived in close touch with many Hindus of average orthodoxy. The treatment I received from them would have made my life a hell, had there not been other factors for compensation. And you would be surprised to know the reason for that attitude. I

myself, with all my cynicism and sophistication, would scarcely believe it, had I not heard it many times over with my own ears. The cats are considered to be bad animals, worthy not even of ordinary kindness, not to mention worship, because they are *not useful*,—literally, as I have heard said so often, “one can have no benefit out of them”.

After this experience, could I be expected to take the rationalised version of cow-worship seriously? There is a whole series of animals which are believed to be impure by the orthodox Hindu. If the Hindus really have a pantheistic attitude towards all forms of life, there should be no such anomaly in their practical behaviour. Cow-worship is not an expression of pantheism; it is the outcome of a utilitarian philosophy. Indeed, there is no philosophy about it. It is a matter of material necessity. An interesting side-light on the spiritualist culture of India!

How did the cow secure a place in the Hindu pantheon? That is a question of the history (and also of the philosophy) of religion. It is beyond the intellectual depth of a modest cat to attempt an investigation in that line; nor would it be quite relevant. Nevertheless, while at it, I cannot resist the temptation of hazarding an opinion.

I think that the only rational answer to the question should be obvious to a critical thinker. The curious custom was the product of a social necessity. Once upon a time, cattle must have been rather scarce in India. Indeed, topographical and climatic conditions of the country are not very suitable for a healthy

growth of the bovine species. Even to-day in India, cattle, while numerous, are generally of an inferior kind with a marked tendency to deteriorate. They cannot thrive only on rank vegetation. They require highlands and the dry cold air associated with such region. The inhabitants of the Central Asiatic plateau were pastoral people, because the country was very suitable for breeding cattle. When a tide of immigration from Central Asia swept over the Hindukush and reached the plains of Northern India, not many cattle could accompany it. The road was too difficult, and cold for bovine animals. The nomads from Central Asia were used to place the highest value on cattle. The treasure was scarce in the new country. Naturally, there was a general anxiety to preserve the few there were. On the other hand, the Aryans were meat-eating people. So, there was the danger of the few available cattle being eaten up soon. The original Hindu scriptures (not the comparatively modern, mostly post-Buddhist, rationalist texts) are full of evidence to the effect that beef was an usual article of food. The intellectual heritage of India was the creation of beef-eating and *soma*- (a kind of alcoholic beverage) drinking *Rishis*. But in the new country, the nomadic immigrants became gradually civilised. They abandoned the nomadic life, and took to the cultivation of the soil. Although the conquered natives were forced to perform all productive labour, yet, cattle were found to be valuable for the purpose. An ox could be more useful socially as a means of production, that is, as a beast of burden, than as an article for consumption. Utility was transformed into divinity.

Backward peoples can think only in terms of religion. The members of the bovine species were spared outright slaughter only to be condemned to lifelong toil for the benefit of man. The cow was spared her flesh and raised to the honoured rank of Mother; for the advantage, she was to give up her own children to slavery to the lust of man. It would be highly interesting to know what would the bovine animal prefer—to be slaughtered all at once, or condemned to lifelong toil. Having regard for the fact that cattle raised as article for consumption are well-fed and taken care of, one would surmise their choice. I, for example, should make no mistake, and presume that, given the choice, my bovine cousins would be equally wise. A short comfortable life is immensely preferable to endless years of dreary toil.

But I wish to distribute the blame equitably. The bovine animals suffer also for their own foolishness of allowing themselves to be domesticated. They proved useful to man, and man with his superior cunning has been making use of them. We cats, for example, are wise not to be useful. The devout Hindu, therefore, hates us, denies us any share of the divine spirit believed to be present in all forms of life. But we are free; and there is nothing more divine than freedom. I wish you orthodox Hindus to realise this homely truth. That will do your souls no end of good.

Neither does my sense of justice permit me to blame the Hindus for sparing the cow her flesh in return for the perpetual slavery of her progeny. There was no ethical question involved. It was a

matter of social necessity. Slavery of man as well as of animals has been the foundation of all antique civilisation. There would be no Greek culture without the institution of slavery. There would be no Brahmanic wisdom without the *Sudras*. The only thing that any reasonable person is likely to find objectionable, is the effort of the modern Hindu intellectuals to rationalise the custom.

One of the *post factum* reasons advanced by the modern believer in the ancient cow-cult is humanitarianism. This reason is utterly unconvincing. Hinduism allows the sacrifice of all sorts of animals. Why should one be humane to one particular species? If the point is pressed, with insistence, in order to rationalise an antiquated institution, the noble sentiment of humanitarianism itself is discredited; its utilitarian, that is, vulgar materialistic basis is laid bare. The cow was to be spared because she could be more useful as the producer of many beasts of burden than as food. Humanitarianism was invented for the purpose. Reason would not persuade the founders of the spiritualist Aryan culture to resist the lust for beef for the sake of common good. Therefore, there had to be a *taboo* with religious sanction. The modern Hindu would argue, that the sacrifice of other animals is not allowed by the original Scriptures. In answer, let him be reminded that neither do the Vedas contain the cult of cow-worship. The Vedic Rishis themselves were robust meat-eaters. In any case, I can assure you from my personal experience that the average Hindu is not particularly humane—more so than any other group of bipeds on a similar cultural level. Believe



me, I have been inhumanly treated by them.

Next I incidentally touch also the cult of vegetarianism. Being the member of a carnivorous species, I naturally feel very strongly on this point. My race is hated by the Hindu ostensibly because it is carnivorous. Every time I caught a prey, my orthodox Hindu neighbours looked upon me as an irredeemable sinner,—as the most hateful animal profaning the God's earth. Well, I should not anticipate. My experience will be related by and by. Now only a few words about vegetarianism as a justification for the unreasonable aversion to cow-killing.

Firstly, if any religion sanctions the eating of some sort of meat, there is absolutely no reason to prohibit a particular kind. If to eat meat is bad for body and soul, goat's meat should not be differently treated from beef. Total vegetarianism, preached and practised only by certain Hindu sects and castes, is no more reasonable. It may be justified by the dogma of the three *Gunas*; but scientifically, that is all nonsense. There is little difference between meat and vegetable in the strict chemical sense; and the influence of food on body as well as on mind (also on soul, supposing there is any) is to be judged from its chemical composition. The nourishment required by the human body must be composed of certain chemicals in certain quantities. You must have that, no matter what you eat,—beef or ghee or boiled banana. The physical system of the pure vegetarian, if it is kept in proper condition, takes in, of necessity, exactly the same quantities of the same chemical stuffs as taken by one living on meat. The ability



to digest and assimilate is a question of habit. As a matter of fact, common people, forced by tradition and religious prejudice to live on a purely vegetarian diet, as is the case in many parts of India, are likely to be intellectually dull and physically deteriorated. In order to get the minimum quantity of carbohydrate and protein, required indispensably by a normal human system, one must eat such a large quantity of rice, gram or maize, that the digestive function consumes more energy than normally assigned to it. In consequence, mental activities are dulled. Milk products in sufficient amount, high-class grains and vegetables, fruits, which may provide the necessary nourishment *economically*, that is, without much misuse of energy, are not available to the great masses of the people, who are therefore generally under-nourished, and mentally dull owing to the necessity of using greater energy for securing an inadequate nutrition from a large bulk of trash they eat. Repudiation of the cult of vegetarianism is a condition for the physical improvement and intellectual awakening of the Indian masses. Let this insignificant member of a carnivorous species tell you: Eat more meat; that is a high-road to the salvation of your precious souls. One lesson you shall learn from the story of my life is that carnivorous animals are never quite domesticated; that is, voluntary slavery, so highly praised as virtue in the herbivorous bovine species, is detestable to us. The dog seems to be an exception,—the perverse traitor to the carnivorous race. But I shall have something to say about the loyalty of the dog later on. That may throw some light on the paradoxical situation.

Let me revert to the main current of my story. The power of articulated speech separates man from the rest of the animal world. It makes possible the process of intellectual development of which man is so very proud. But there is another side of the picture. Prejudice and hypocrisy result from the power of speech, and they are effective checks upon real intellectual development.

Originally, language evolved as the medium for expressing emotions, and later on, ideas. Eventually, the original relation was reversed: Language became a fetter upon the freedom of feelings and ideas. Human mind became conventionalised. It came to be dominated by terms. Nothing has been so harmful for the spiritual development of man than the tyranny of words. Take the Holy Scriptures (of any religion), for example. These collections of words teach man to falsify his feelings, that is, to be hypocritical to himself; to hide his emotions, that is, to turn life into a huge lie; and to abjure the freedom of thought. One cannot think freely for himself, and believe at the same time—in the religious sense. God is substituted by the name of God. The great bulk of the Hindu population devoutly believe in the spiritual efficacy of the habit of exclaiming: “Ram Ram” or “Hari Hari” or “Shiva Shiva”. I have heard any number of grown-up people expatiating upon the common cant that *dharma* is the essence of life. But ask them what is *dharma*; hardly one in a thousand has any definite notion about what the so freely and frequently used term stands for. It is a word, and millions of people have forfeited the most rudiment-

ary faculty of thought under the tyranny of words. Even when the word *dharma* is associated with some concrete meaning, it only stands for a body of superstitions, prejudices, social customs and irrational modes of living. These again are not uniform. They vary from place to place, and from sect to sect. But if you ask why these customs are observed or why such and such ceremonies are performed, the answer is that they are prescribed by *dharma*. So, we come back to the question: What is *dharma*? The entire human existence is dominated by a meaningless word or indefinable term.

Those who wish to raise religion above a disharmonious body of habits and superstitions, define *dharma* as practices which help one to have a glimpse of the reality of the world,—the World Soul. This is the definition given by Gandhi who is popularly acclaimed as the embodiment of the true essence not only of Hinduism, but of all religion. This refers the question back to still another word which also is utterly meaningless, because it stands for something admittedly indefinable. None can tell what is the *Paramatma* like. That mythical creation of human fantasy is beyond description in words, and not to be reached by mind. How is, then, one to know that the imaginary glimpse supposed to be got through prescribed practices, is a glimpse of the mystic World Soul? Is this not again submitting entire life to the tyranny of a word?

I know all about the specious definitions of the term *dharma*. But that is rationalisation—to make a prejudice appear reasonable and even neces-

sary. The definition most favoured by the modern Hindu intellectual is: *Dharma* is that which supports the world (human society). But who is to decide what supports the world? For the religious, this question is irrelevant. The decision has been made once for all. It is recorded in the Scriptures. Follow the scriptural injunctions, and all will be well. Again, we are back to words. To get out of this vicious circle, Hinduism teaches that, in the beginning, there was the word. (Christianity also says the same thing). The mystic symbol and sound Om is believed to be the foundation of language, and therefore to contain the essence of truth. It is highly interesting to note that it can hardly be classified as a part of articulated speech. It is a sound which can be made by other animals than man. My mighty nephew, for instance, makes it to the terror of man. But the modern rationaliser (not rationalist) is there to protest against this profanity. He says that "Om" is a composite sound: A plus U plus M. Granted this is so, it is difficult to understand how the situation is improved. What the theory proves, if it proves anything, is that this sound originated with such primitive human beings as spoke a language only with two vowels and one consonant. Men who are so backward in the process of developing articulate speech are scarcely differentiated from lower animals. Here we find not even a word, but a partially articulated sound, dominating the entire spiritual life of a people.

Why should one be spiritually elevated simply by repeating this half-articulated sound? Why "Mew Mew" should not serve the same purpose for



me? How can a meaningless syllable be the mystic emblem of the impersonal God? How can one have religious feeling through the preposterous habit of imitating the sound while belching lustily after a huge meal? All these and innumerable other questions of the kindred nature can be silenced by the tyranny of words. Don't think, but believe—that is the doctrine for the propagation of which language was useful in the earlier stages of human development; and by far the greater bulk of mankind is still languishing in those stages of mental slavery imposed by the development of articulated speech. India is still far away from the freedom from the tyranny of "*Bakya Brahma*".

Take, for example, your nationalist movement as represented by the Congress. It is dominated by a bunch of words and terms—*swaraj*, non-cooperation, non-violence, sacrifice, suffering. To this already rich quasi-moral political vocabulary, some terms of pure metaphysics have been added, the most notable being truth. Every Congressman swears to practice truth and non-violence in thought, word and deed. It is generally believed that these ethical terms and metaphysical concepts endow Indian nationalism with a spiritual halo. Everybody repeats these terms, but few stop to think what they really mean. The result is intellectual stagnation, and hopeless confusion regarding the socio-political object of the movement.

If you have the courage to look at your gods with a moderate regard for reality, their clay-feet will be easily visible. Those not gifted with blind



faith or an utter lack of critical faculty cannot find any political difference between Dominion Status demanded by the Liberals and Purna Swaraj idealised by the Congress. Yet, every Congressman has, by some queer mental process, completely persuaded himself that his political ideal and that of the Liberals are as different as heaven and earth; that his patriotism is unquestionable, while the honest advocates of Dominion Status are despicable traitors.

Congressmen denounce constitutionalism, but are proud of their staunch adherence to the doctrine of non-violence. It is surprising that none sees the crass contradiction involved in this attitude. If you really want national independence, and are honestly convinced that constitutional methods cannot lead you to the goal, you are logically committed to adopt methods which, from the point of view of the established authority, must be unconstitutional. In other words, the Congressman is a believer in violence and non-violence at the same time!\* For, unconstitutional methods cannot be strictly non-violent. On the other hand, if he is really wedded to the doctrine of non-violence as religiously as he proclaims, then, his rejection of constitutionalism is sheer hypocrisy. This is no longer a matter of argument. The doctrine of non-violence has inevitably placed the Congress on the safe and sane road of constitutionalism from which it tended to wander away.

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This contradiction in the Congress ideology has become even more manifest since this was written. Vide the famous "Wardha Statement" of June 1940. The statement simply means condemnation of revolution for combating which, use of violence is justifiable.

Nowhere is the tyranny of words so galling as in connection with this term "non-violence". This tyranny compels intelligent people to set up the most absurd theories. Side by side with non-violence, the word revolution has also been included in the Congress jargon. Nothing is more ridiculous than to shout those two words in the self-same breath. The Congressman, nevertheless, does it, and to justify this remarkable performance, has invented the legend of a "peaceful or bloodless revolution". No use telling him that such a phenomenon has never happened in history. He retorts with arrogant conviction that India will set the example. What he really does, however, is to betray his ignorance of the theory and practice of revolution, and of the history of the revolutionary movements of the world throughout the ages. But he is concerned with words—not with what the words stand for. He would, if he possibly could, put India back under the village economy of mediaeval feudal-patriarchalism, and triumphantly call that a revolution! It is the word that counts.

The tyranny of the word "truth" is even worse. No other word in the human vocabulary is so undefinable. Yet, it has become a fashionable slogan with the Congressman. He no doubt feels morally elevated when he takes the vow of truth. But he never inquires about the nature of the goddess he swears allegiance to. What is truth? I challenge any devotee of the goddess to answer this simple question.

When I am hungry, it is unquestionably true that I am hungry; nature testifies to it. I see a bowl of milk, and lap it up without taking the trouble of

asking the permission of the owner. Besides, there is very little chance of the permission being granted even if solicited. So, here is another truth; most human beings, with all their claim to moral superiority, are not inclined to sacrifice in favour of a hungry animal, unless this is useful to them. Now, how would you characterise my act of lapping up the bowl of milk without the owner's permission? It is stealing—an evidence of moral depravity ascribed to my species. But do you ever stop to think that this act of moral depravity is committed in a situation brought about by the combination of two truths?

In order to wiggle out of this uncomfortable fix, you have invented other moral dogmas—another set of meaningless words. You preach self-control and sacrifice. I must learn to control my carnal desires, so that I might resist the temptation of stealing even when hungry. But the real motive behind this moral doctrine is not to cure me of my depravity, but to find a safeguard for the bowls of milk belonging to men. Safeguard is not an invention of the British gentlemen who composed the Government of India Act, 1935. It has been the basic institution of human society ever since it came to be based upon the privilege for the few at the cost of the many.

Besides, you are so blinded by the anxiety to protect the privileges of your race, that you set up a moral doctrine which strikes at the root of all morals which is religion. If it were sinful to eat when hungry, God would have made animals differently—without stomachs. Hunger is, therefore, God-given. To satisfy it is to obey the law of Providence. To

starve rather than to steal the milk, which would most probably never be given voluntarily, therefore, does not constitute a virtue—of self-control; it is committing the sacrilege of proposing to make the world better than God has created it. This amounts to a denial of God. Because, if you really believe in God, you can never think that things could be otherwise than made by him. Any such thought implies atheism and strikes at the root of dogmatic ethics which has kept the human race enslaved through ages. Unless there is some super-natural standard, there can be no authority for the absoluteness of concepts represented by such terms as truth, justice etc.

As regards the other moral virtue—sacrifice, don't you think it would be more appropriate to preach it to the owner of the bowl of milk? By addressing the sermon to me, you are again safeguarding the bowl of milk for its owner who has misappropriated it from the calf.

Take another example—this time concerning your own kind. In this case, you would perhaps see the point more clearly. One must always tell the truth. To lie is a sin. Now, suppose someone's son has committed an offence punishable by law. If the man tells a lie, his son can escape the penalty of law. What should the man do in such a painful predicament? Tell the truth, or perform his paternal duty, which is to protect the son from danger? Truth here runs counter to a natural feeling which is supposed to elevate man above the animal.

There are innumerable such instances when practice of truth not only violates some other code of



morality, but often amounts to a veritable lie. In such predicaments, man must choose between the gods involved, although both of them are equally fickle. Subjected to the tyranny of words, man has lost the faculty of acting naturally, that is, according to his own judgment which can be correct only when determined by spontaneous emotion.

Whenever I chance upon a bowl of milk, a very rare occurrence in the world, I am condemned to live in, owing to some crime committed in a previous life, or a sheer whim on the part of my parents, my first impulse is to go straight at it. I am not ashamed of this impulse because it is a law of my physical being. Borrowing from the human language, I can say that it is a part of the providential arrangement which has made me a cat. If the Providence thought that such an impulse is bad, that it mars the harmony of his dispensation, he surely could have easily left it out of my system. In short, when I obey the impulse to steal, I simply act according to the will of God. I am sure that any normal human being feels a similar impulse in an analogous situation. If he usually appears to control the impulse, that is not because of any moral superiority, but simply because of cowardice. He is either afraid of others calling, and even punishing, him as a thief, or he is ashamed of himself. In the latter case, it is worse.

However it may be with human beings, I know no inhibition, and therefore look upon the rarely available bowl of milk as God-sent, and lap it up with no moral scruple, although with the fear of being beaten. What else could I do? From experience



I know that my chance of getting it by truthful, legal and peaceful means, that is, by begging from the owner, is less than one to ten. On the contrary, the chance is very much greater if I follow the sovereign truth of my God-given impulse, and let legality and peace go by the board. I violate the law when I drink the milk seldom to be had for asking, without the permission of the owner. If I had the misfortune of being a member of the barbarous institution called civilised human society, I would be punished, if caught, which seldom happens to those who can steal cleverly. My prosecutors would never stop to enquire how much chance I had of getting the permission; instead, they calculate my responsibility by their standard. Their logic is simple. The milk did not belong to me; therefore, I had no right to drink it even if I died of hunger. They are indifferent to that possible tragedy.

Possession is nine points in law. I wonder how many people stop to think that man-made laws are always violating the laws of God. Stealing is also violence. It is only a milder form of robbery. But the queer thing is that, if you go a step farther, black becomes white. Conquest is robbery on a large scale; yet that has not been placed under a moral taboo or the penalty of any law. To-day the Indians decry conquest, because they are the victims. All the moral cants preached on that score are entirely unconvincing. No sensible man can possibly believe that non-violence is inherent in Hindu humanitarianism, so long as Rama, Krishna, Arjun, Bhim etc. remain the ideals of Hindu manhood. Those mythical heroes are glorified for their feats of conquest and acts of

wholesale violence. Those very Indians who condemn the conquest of one people by another, nevertheless prove the greatness of their forefathers on the strength of their over-seas dominions. Stealing being a modest form of conquest is, of course, an act of violence, but precisely for that very reason, it is creditable and a matter of pride. If everybody had the moral courage to steal, there would be no thief in the world.

To return to the point. If I act under the first impulse, that is, under the law of my being, I am usually successful in satisfying my hunger. The inference is that to act so represents a correct judgment of the situation. I might act differently, solicit the owner's permission. The first difficulty is the inability of man to understand me. As soon as I say: "Mew Mew", he drives me away without any consideration of what I might want. He does not stop to think that an animal also becomes hungry and must satisfy it by hook or crook. He also acts under impulse; but his impulse is not natural like mine. It is conditioned. He acts automatically to defend his bowl of milk against my depradation. He was not born with the bowl of milk. It is not a part of his physical being as hunger, or desire, if you like, is mine. Hunger or desire is God-given. If you are religious, or believe in the teleological view of the world, you cannot deny this without contradicting your faith or philosophy. Any physical impulse is God-given. Property, on the contrary, is acquired by man himself. My relation to the bowl of milk is providentially ordained; the owner's is guaranteed by man-made law; it is an artificial obstacle to the

free realisation of Divine Will.

In the first place, the milk belongs to some cow; secondly, it has come to the possession of the man through the privation of its natural and rightful receiver—the calf. Thus, the ownership of the bowl of milk has been acquired through violence committed against the maternal feeling of the cow and the physical necessity of the calf. Thirdly, for the time being, it was not needed by the man. For all these and other subsidiary considerations, I am more justified in stealing it (I use this incorrect term in the absence of a more appropriate one) than the man in guarding it against my attack.

But the vast bulk of mankind, notwithstanding their superior intelligence, are debarred from taking this sane view of the situation. They can think only in terms of words. Originally, words were names given to things, emotions, feelings, relations, ideas. In course of time, names assumed independence of what they originally stood for. The empty words were woven into a net in which human mind was caught.

This is a topic of such an absorbing interest and supreme importance that no apology is needed for my dwelling upon it still a little longer. Language has been always used, and it is used even to-day to a great extent, not as the medium for the expression of emotions, but to hide or rationalise emotions.

Sexual attraction is a fundamental attribute of higher organisms. Thanks to the power of articulated speech, human beings invented a word for it—love. Eventually, the word “love” came to mean all

sorts of imaginary sentiments; its real sense was lost in a cloud of hypocrisy and lie. The foolishness went to the extent of declaring that love is a spiritual sentiment; to connect it with sexual attraction is to debase it. But however much he may moralise, man can never run away from his own shadow, so to say. Sex-impulse is a basic law of his or her being. It must be satisfied. As a matter of fact, the law of physical being is obeyed, biological necessity is complied with; but it is done hypocritically. Man has become ashamed of himself.

The veil of hypocrisy which hides, and unsuccessfully tries to suppress, the natural inclination for the joy of sex-life, is again woven out of words. The word *Brahmacharya* occupies the centre of the travesty of hypocrisy. Under the prejudice represented by this word, the deluded honest are driven into a losing battle against the sovereign authority of nature. A battle that can never be won can be kept up only through the employment of sham, subterfuge and camouflage. One is obliged to practise lie and hypocrisy in order to purify his physical being and to attain high intellectual powers! One cannot lay claim to any spiritual attainment unless he believes in, and pretends to practise, *Brahmacharya*. You must believe in the word, even if you experience the impossibility of practising it. The tyranny of one single word does not permit you to be frank. Anyone with some knowledge about the construction and function of the human body, will tell you that sex-intercourse within certain limits does no harm. The fluid discharged in that act does not contribute to any extraordinary physical power through its hypotheti-



cal retention. Indeed, the retention is positively harmful for the adult. The sperm has a specific function in organic mechanism,—to fertilise the ovum. It serves no other purpose. Modern psychology has discovered that active suppression or subconscious inhibition of the sex-impulse is the cause of grave mental derangements. Strange road to high intellectual powers!

If literature is the record of feelings and emotions, it must be liberated from the monopoly of man in order to rise up to its full stature. Under man's monopoly, it presents a distorted or falsified picture of feelings and emotions. Either animals should break into the monopoly, following my example, or men and women should have the courage and honesty to own upto their natural impulses.

In the accursed West, modern literature, to some extent, has freed itself from the noble human qualities of falsehood and hypocrisy. There are men and women who are not ashamed of their feelings and emotions. There are artists who are neither mystics nor mythologists. But in India, literature is still human par excellence. It has no use for reality. For it, truth is only a word to be repeated sanctimoniously, but never to be practised. The heroes and heroines of Indian fiction are pictures of falsehood; because they do not correspond to anything which really exists in this mortal world. The predominating theme of Indian literature is love, which is depicted in such a way that it has nothing to do with the real emotion. Even the delightfully sexual lyrics of Vidyapati, Chandidas, Jaydev, and even of



Rabindranath of our own days, are interpreted as mystic accounts of spiritual elevation, of an erotic communion with the impersonal God! The legendary tales of the philanderings of a youthful cowherd and the delicious abandon of the milkmaids, jolted out of all inhibition by the flood of tropical spring, are given a dull scriptural value, and even a philosophical content is read in them—mutual attraction between *Jeevatma* and *Paramatma*. The realities of life are still taboo in Indian literature, which is saturated with vapid romanticism, sloppy sentimentality and love degraded to a hypocritical spiritual experience.

In India, even to-day, man wants to be God. The woman, who is usually more sensible, is also corrupted by the hypocritical epithet of "Devi". Notwithstanding all the verbiage about love, women cannot have any illusion about man's real attitude towards them. Running after the illusive ideal of godness, man loses sight of the reality of his being. An illusive goal, of course, can never be reached. Man can never be God. Only trying to hide his humanness, he becomes the embodiment of hypocrisy and falsehood. Literature hitherto has been mostly devoted to the rationalisation of this degradation.

As regards intelligence, modern psychology has blown up the bubble of man's qualitative superiority to the lower animals. I employ the usual term "lower" with protest. Man is really a degraded and depraved animal. In reality, he or she is an animal. His whole being, including the much

vaunted spiritual qualities, is determined by impulses which are common to all the higher forms of organisms. He is so proud of his intelligence; but he knows so mighty little of the animal instincts that dominate the thin layer of his conscious mind. We animals follow our instincts consciously and voluntarily. Man is a slave of the animal instincts which compose his sub-conscious mind. He is like an ox, driven under the yoke. The most scientific school of modern psychology—behaviourism—deprives man of mind, and reduces him to a mere organic machine. In view of this scientific evidence, is it not insolent of man to look down upon all but his own species as lower animals?

We, the so-called lower animals, act instinctively; that is to say, we obey the laws of nature which the religious should regard as expressions of the Divine Will. Instinct is the motive force of all human action. This has been established by modern psychology. Even Macdougall, neither a behaviourist nor a psycho-analyst, subscribes to this view. In his opinion also, human beings act to satisfy their instincts; without instinctive impulse, they can neither act nor think. The spiritual superiority of the human being is a fiction. Indeed, the endeavour of man to rationalise his instincts, to clothe his animal impulses in the deceptive garb of intellectuality and morality, is a sign of spiritual perversity. For, thereby they pretend to improve upon the world as made by God. If you believe in God, don't prostitute your faith and insult your God. If there is a Divine Will, let its absolute sovereignty remain unchallenged.

Don't pretend to be something different from, and superior to, what you really are. Don't be ashamed of your animal nature, and the full glory of manhood and humanness will be yours. Run after the illusion of realising the spiritual essence of man, and you will degrade yourself; for, in that case, you will be living a life of lie and hypocrisy.

Mentally as well as physically, human being is dominated not by his consciousness, which is supposed to be the spark of divine light; all his thoughts as well as actions are determined by the "Unconscious" which is the accumulated store of natural impulses. The heritage of the whole animal ancestry of man is deposited in that store. The mental or spiritual aspect of human being is like an iceberg: Only a small part appears above the level of consciousness, the rest remaining submerged in the Unconscious. This remainder, which is called the unconscious mind, or simply the Unconscious, is not only the larger, but the more important part of human personality. Emotions, consciously felt, ideas, consciously held, acts, consciously performed, all originate in the Unconscious, so that the Unconscious determines the content of consciousness. This being the case, the conscious part of human mind—that is, rationalised emotions, imaginary ideas, hypocritical acts—is a secondary factor; because its contents and functions are determined by forces lying deep down—in the essentially animal being of man.

This, in brief, is the view of the other prevalent school of modern psychology—psycho-analysis. According to this school of psychology, which has prov-

ed to be of great value for mental therapeutics, to discover, and allow unrestricted expression to the animal impulses, hidden in the dark region of the Unconscious, is the only way to a normal spiritual life. Natural impulses are allowed to appear in the realm of consciousness only after they have gone through the process of "sublimation". What is called conscience acts as the censor, and would not permit civilised human beings to act according to the impulses, inherent in their very existence, unless these are dressed up in the glittering garbs of hypocrisy and falsehood.

The Hindus have the symbol of *Lingam*. Nothing bears out the Freudian theory of the *libido* more pointedly. The natural desire for the pleasure of sexual life is suppressed by the cult of Brahmacharya; but nature takes her revenge. Sex-instinct is one of the two sovereign factors of the higher forms of organic existence. It cannot be suppressed. So, it appears in the singular custom of worshipping the sex organ as the symbol of God. The sovereign power exacts homage as if with vengeance. Religious ceremonies and social institutions of the Hindus provide innumerable instances of the sublimation of natural impulses.

Since all the spiritual exploits of man—religious, artistic, moral—are ultimately governed by forces emanating from the unconscious, that is, the storehouse of animal (biological) instincts, my venture into literature is not such an unnatural event as it may appear to be.

There is nothing to prevent it except my defi-



ciency as regards the power of speech. But I have shown that this is not a pure blessing. Therefore, the handicap may enable me to excel in my literary venture. My thoughts will not be paralysed by words. I should have no difficulty in calling a spade a piece of iron with a certain shape, if such a definition would be more effective than the conventional nonsense—a spade is a spade. Yet, *technically*, the handicap remains; it must be overcome. What I have to say will not be understood by men if it is not said in their language. To overcome this difficulty, I had to find a human collaborator,—one who, having outgrown the childish illusion of divine essence, is clearly conscious of his natural animalness and therefore in a position to read my reflections from my behaviour, and express them in human language.

I found such a collaborator in an inmate of the prison where I was born. I chanced upon him in the first month of my life. Conventionally, I became his pet, and he my owner. But in reality, the relation was entirely different. Otherwise, the singular collaboration would not take place, and this unprecedented effort of portraying animal emotions in human language could not be made. No, it is not quite correct to say that this is the first portrayal of animal emotions in human language. Because, in a way, practically the whole of literature (I mean what is called *belles-lettres*—artistic, as distinct from scientific, literature) is such a portrayal. Only with this difference that there animal impulses are sublimated, that is to say, depraved, degraded, distorted, falsified, as pseudo-noble human sentiments and humane actions. This, after all, is a great difference. More-



over, it is not going to be a record of my emotions only. It would rather be a record of my observations of human behaviour, and of critical reflections upon the ideas behind that behaviour.

I think I have sufficiently justified my desire to break into the human monopoly on literature. The monopoly is based upon two factors: Power of articulated speech, and intellectual and emotional superiority. The former does give man a position of vantage; but so far the advantage has been mostly abused. That, however, does not help us. We still remain unable to give man a piece of our mind. I have overcome the difficulty in an ingenious way. As regards the latter factor, the monopoly is based upon a pure fiction.

Man does not know how intelligent I am, or how keen are my feelings. But to-day these are no longer matters of pure speculation. The knowledge of environments and reactions thereto are determined by the organs of sense. It is a well-known fact that the perceptive power of this or that sense is much greater than that of man in various species of lower animals. My sight, for example, is much stronger than man's. I see many things that he cannot. My intelligence is richer to that extent. Some observation gives one a glimpse of the subtlety of our general sensations and of the acuteness of instinct. All these and a great variety of other phenomena of animal life are explained by modern physiology.

Take for instance the brain—the seat of intelligence. The difference between my brain and that of

man is not qualitative, but only quantitative. Mine is smaller, though not necessarily in proportion to the size of the skull. If my head were as large as the average human head, my brain would have been perhaps larger proportionately. While the disparity in size is relative, structurally and functionally there is no difference. Intelligence is the sum total of the impressions made upon the brain by the environments. These impressions are received through the intermediary of the sense organs. I am more sensitive, not only as regards sight, but practically in every respect, than man. That is to say, my store of impressions is not poorer than man's. Why, then, should I be considered less intelligent?

Animals lower than man are supposed to be unable to think. This supposition is the result of man's vanity. Simply because we cannot express our thoughts through a co-ordinated system of articulated sounds, accessible to limited human understanding, man characteristically makes capital out of his ignorance and lays sole claim to the spiritual property of thought. Thinking, however, is a physical process,—response to stimuli from outside. It is a matter of common observation that animals react to stimuli similarly as human beings do. The stimuli are transformed into ideas and emotions by physico-chemical processes taking place in the body. Anatomically and physiologically, human body differs only quantitatively from the bodies of animals next lower in the stages of organic evolution. The human nervous system is more complicated. Even this much cannot be stated with scientific accuracy. There is only one reliable way to the knowledge of mental

activity. It is the observation of bodily behaviour. The only bodily behaviour that distinguishes man from lower animals is speech, and speech is thinking aloud. But serious thinking is done silently. Chatter-boxes are generally light-hearted and empty-headed. As the wise old saying goes, silence is golden. When a man sits with his legs crossed in a very uncomfortable posture, his eyes shut or turned towards the navel, he is believed to be merged in deep meditation of the most exalting significance. How do you know that I am not engaged in some sort of revealing spiritual exercise when I sit with all fours drawn under my belly, my eyes shut not in sleep, but in a meditative mood? If you have the patience and power of observation; and (this is of more importance) if you can for a moment get over human egocentrism, you may find in my countenance signs of sublimation as are imagined to be associated only with *sadhus*, particularly when these have their brains dulled with the spiritualising fume of *ganja*. I also appear more contented, more suffused with the spiritual light shining within myself, when I have had a good drink of milk, voluntarily given or cleverly stolen; a juicy morsel of new meat. A mouse or a squirrel, for example, does the trick even better.

Indeed, we cats are naturally given to philosophising, because we can observe human life from very close quarters. We become more meditative, the less we have to bother about procuring food. Leisure is a condition for greater spiritual activity. This socio-biological law is equally applicable to us. Hindus particularly should concede our spiritual superiority. They practise occasional *maun* to re-

cuperate spiritual energy exhausted in daily talks. Our whole life is engaged in that *tapasya*. It is a blessing in disguise that we are physiologically (not providentially) debarred from giving our mental activity articulated forms. This physiological deficiency guarantees us the spiritual freedom, lost by man. His thoughts and emotions are limited by speech, subjected to the tyranny of words. We know no such limitation. Our thoughts and emotions, having no articulated forms, cannot be recorded in the human sense. But they are preserved in a different form, and enter into the composition of the sub-conscious part of human mind which ultimately determines all man's actions, mental as well as physical.

Except speech, practically all other physical actions are identical with men and animals. Identical physical behaviour must be produced by mental activities of similar nature. So, only the superstition, that a soul resides in human body as the source of all spiritual activities, denies power of thought on the part of lower animals. The events recorded in the ensuing story offer evidence of my intelligence. In course of my story, you will be acquainted also with a tom-cat with much greater experience than mine. In him you will find ample evidence for carefully calculated action to outwit human enemies. You will find in him Napoleonic boldness, Macchiavellian sophistication, and the cunning of a Richelieu.

As regards the other branch of spiritual life, namely, emotions, modern physiology traces them to the secretion of chemical fluids from the ductless



glands. These glands are not only common to all higher biological forms, including man, but are actually transplantable. Practically all the intellectual and emotional activities are produced by the secretion from the thyroid glands. When these don't function well, they can be artificially stimulated to secrete the "spiritual" fluid (which is chemical, in reality) by the injection of thyrodine extract prepared from the corresponding glands in the body of some animal standing near to man in the scale of biological evolution. Modern surgery has gone farther. Not only is the human body rejuvenated through the grafting of thyroid glands taken from some lower animal; the operation cures mental and emotional exhaustion as well. Another set of emotions is connected with the pituitary glands. An injection of the serum prepared from this gland belonging to animals produces in man fear with all the bodily behaviour associated with this emotion.

All these and many other observed facts and experimental results have definitely led to the conclusion that spiritual properties are functions of the brain and of the central nervous system connected with it. Since a long series of biological forms lower than man are also possessed of these physical organs of spiritual activity, they cannot be denied the credit of the activity itself. This view is held by practically all the biologists and educated medical men of to-day.

Animal psychology is a very young science. Yet it has gathered enough data for the assumption that spiritual processes can be traced in all living beings far down the successive stages of organic evolution.



Indeed, there is evidence of the process continuing even in the plants. It is as yet too premature to assert that plants feel pain, pleasure etc. But there are some experimental data showing that plants possess the power of response to stimulus, and are endowed with organs through which reaction to the stimulus takes place. In any case, the continuity of spiritual life throughout the successive forms of animal life is generally admitted by modern psychology which is no longer considered to be "the science of the soul", but has become a part of biology, completely identified with physiology. Animal psychology is still young; but zoological researches have gone very far towards precise knowledge regarding the facts of animal life. Zoology does not show any place where a line can be drawn separating the animals with soul from those denied the privilege of this "divine light". The line can certainly not be drawn to differentiate man from the rest of the animal kingdom. The similarity of physical organs and functions, which cause spiritual activities, is too evident for the purpose. Even the effort to draw the line at the beginning of the evolution of biological forms with the central nervous system, is not successful. For, scientifically, even the amoeba cannot be denied some sort of psychical experience. It reacts to external stimuli; so, there must be a corresponding internal process.

As regards higher mammals—elephants, horses, dogs, apes (my species is also included in this aristocracy of animals)—there is no room for doubt about their intelligence. About feelings and emotions, the room for doubt is altogether absent. Of course, while claiming intelligence, a claim fully

conceded by science, I do not pretend that I can juggle with differential calculus, or follow the mathematical logic of Russell, Whitehead, Wittgenstein and company, or understand the equations of mathematical physics, any better than most men do. I made some effort to establish my claim to intelligence only to prove that my reactions to the treatment I received from human beings can serve as reliable material for a criticism of human beliefs, ideas, habits. Unless some intelligence were conceded to me, no credit can be claimed for my power of observation; my reflection need not be taken seriously. But lest I bend the stick on the other way, let me emphasise the difference (as distinct from any qualitative superiority, although my cattish pride is hurt to admit that) created by the power of articulated speech. This power enables man to make greater and more fruitful use of the physical basis of spiritual life. Consequently, though on the common denominator of animal being, he is more privileged than myself. In him, our common animal heritage has attained the glory of a marvellous development which outshines the legendary glory of the gods in Heaven. Unfortunately, most men cannot appreciate its value, and make proper use of it.

The point I wish to make is that man *as man* is not intrinsically superior to lower animals. He is only a superior animal. More correctly, he is a higher biological form. Humanness, being the culmination of animalness, the magnificent monument of spiritual elevation, stands not on the imaginary foundation of any divine essence, but on the bedrock of an objective truth,—man's physical being, an out-

come of biological evolution; his brain and nervous system are but more complicated forms of the sensitive and reflex organs possessed also by lower animals; his unconscious mind is the store of experience acquired throughout the countless stages of organic evolution.

I dispute the superiority of man, so that he may be provoked to take up the challenge, and cast a critical glance at himself. In the light of my own experience, I shall show that human beings I have come in touch with (and they represent practically the entire Indian people) have travelled very little on the road of real spiritual progress. Indeed, tyranny of words has degraded them below the level of animals —naturalness—to an artificial life of ignorance, falsehood and hypocrisy. Their sense of superiority is a castle in the air. Under the illusion of a spiritual existence, distinct from, independent of and unattached to, the physical being, they have turned their whole life into a travesty of falsehood. Dominated by the extreme egoism of imagining himself identical with the divine essence of the world, they have forsaken all sense of reality, frankness and truth. I do not recognise them to be superior to me, because they cannot feel as freely as I do, cannot enjoy as frankly, cannot live as truthfully, cannot behave as normally, cannot think as honestly, cannot act as spontaneously as myself.

The subject of my observation having been the daily life of average human beings, not given to high intellectual occupations, and what I am going to record having been my reactions

to stimuli, and reflections resulting therefrom, I should be fairly able to tackle the task undertaken with the intelligence conceded to me by modern science. In any case, this attempted collaboration and co-ordination of the human faculty of articulated speech and experiments in animal psychology may amount to some modest contribution to critical literature. The story may have a speculative flavour; but it does not suffer from any animistic prejudice. My collaborator has simply tried to imagine what I would say under the given conditions, if I were endowed with the power of speech. How far he has succeeded, I cannot judge, because I understand the import of human language only very fragmentarily. But I have a more reliable standard of judgment: My experience that he made patient and persistent efforts to understand my feelings, to meet my desires and closely observe my behaviour with the purpose of making a general inference about my emotions and responses to stimuli. Having done this, he is not liable to write something much different from what I felt and thought. So, I can vouch for the authenticity of the story and faithfulness of the psychological record. The critical portions may represent more the ideas of my collaborator than mine. But here, human intellect has only elaborated upon the spiritual properties of my animal being. My reactions to certain human behaviours, or certain human characteristics brought out by my presence, simply provided my collaborator with the clue for a specific line of criticism. In short, it has been a perfect collaboration; and this was possible only through the realisation of the animal essence of humanness



and the animal (instinctive) foundation of human spirit.

Finally, this unprecedented literary venture is justified by the exigency of social protest. Great works of literature are inspired by a spirit of revolt against social institutions and traditional ideas supporting them. Modern Indian literature is as yet practically untouched by such a spirit. But it is the crying need of the day. If literature is to contribute its share to the much belated Indian Renaissance, it must expose the rottenness of social life, the falsity of popular notions, the ridiculousness of time-honoured institutions, instead of idealising them. Cases of revolt there are in plenty. It is remarkable that they are not discovered even by writers with a tendency to social reform. Nationalist preoccupation debars even the educated youth from a critical approach to social problems. Nationalism is a typically human virtue or vice. I am free from it. Animals, and human beings deprived of human comforts and culture, as the majority of them are in India, are naturally indifferent to the empty ideals of nationalism. Therefore, my literary venture may serve the purpose of introducing into modern Indian literature the spirit of criticism which will enlighten it, bring it in touch with the realities of life, and therefore raise it above the present level of idealistic platitude, stale romanticism, vapid sentimentality and sanctimonious moralising. I call upon young India to revolt not against the cruel treatment meted out to me, but against the foulness, falseness, hypocrisy that vitiate Indian social life and block the road to progress. As I have no reason to justify human action, I have



spoken frankly about the disgusting and ridiculous traits of human beings, who entered into the narrow circle of my lowly life. I hope that, by bringing these traits in a sharp relief, the story of my life will provoke the reader to focus his or her attention on them, and to trace them into their social sub-soil. I don't pretend to produce a great literary work. But by sounding the note of social protest, laying bare some of the causes of social revolt, my modest effort may serve as an impetus to the production of such works by others more qualified for the task.

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## WHY ONE IS BORN?

**I**N India, it is not an usual custom to celebrate the birthday; therefore, even in the case of human beings of the average sort, the date of entry into this world of sorrow and suffering is seldom recorded or remembered. There can be no question of such historical accuracy in the case of a plebeian cat like myself.

It will be interesting to reflect a little on the question why the Indians don't celebrate the birthday. Why are they so indifferent to the greatest, the basic, at any rate, event of life? Undoubtedly, birth is the fundamental event of life. One cannot live without being born. Life presupposes birth. Is it not strange that a whole nation should be so indifferent to such a vital moment of existence? The indifference results from the Hindu doctrine, traditionally preached, but never really believed, that life in this world is an illusion or a bondage. Who cares to take an illusion seriously? It matters very little when it begins and when it ends. One visits the fairy land or the underworld of monsters in a dream. The unreality of the pleasure or pain associated with the experience is realised as soon as wakefulness returns. The memory lingers, but one does not bother to remember the exact moment when the illusory experience began. Life, according to Hindu religion, and philosophy, is no more real than a dream. It may be a plea-

sant dream or a night-mare, according to one's *karma*. Birth is the moment when the dream begins. Why should this particular moment be recorded and remembered? There is still less reason for doing so when life is looked upon as a bondage—a misfortune. The prisoner does not remember the date of his incarceration in order to celebrate it. Why bother to remember the day when misfortune overtook you?

This religious philosophical doctrine thrives only on the social background appropriate for it. The vast majority of the Indian people have sufficient reason to look upon life as a misfortune. They live a life full of sorrow, suffering and misery. The joys of life are unknown to them. To toil and keep dire starvation away from the door is their lot. Physical comforts, intellectual recreation, cultural elevation, are all beyond their reach. Nor are these conditions new. They are as old as the pessimistic view of life, mistakenly called, and fraudulently glorified, as spiritualist. If to-day this philosophy of life, which effectively kills all incentive to progress, finds support in the gloomy and hopeless conditions of the life of the masses, it could not have arisen originally except on a similar social background. It could not have persisted through so many centuries, unless its social foundation remained unimpaired. "Ram Raj" is an empty legend. Had the legend any foundation of historical truth, India would have had a different philosophy of life. Or, if the mythical "Golden Age" ever was a reality, that must have been before India became a victim of her "spiritualist" philosophy. Besides, Ramayan itself does not tell us how the masses of people lived under Ram Raj. It describes

the splendour of the Ajodhya Puri; but omits to give any information about the source of the royal riches. These were evidently not produced by the princely parasites who spent all their time in practising archery; nor were the riches conjured up by the Brahmins. Even King Janak could not have tilled more than a small patch of land with his golden plough. The riches were produced by others who lived under conditions hardly human. Otherwise, how could they be utterly absent from the picture of the society of the epoch? The historian obviously did not count them among human beings. Ram Raj, therefore, could not have been a Golden Age for the masses of the people.

I am not engaged in the much needed, but still to be done, composition of a social history of India. Religious beliefs and philosophical doctrines of a people can be correctly appreciated only in the light of such a history, inductively reconstructed and critically written.

My modest life reflects to some extent only contemporary social conditions. But the incentive to investigate the past comes from a realistic view of the present, and conversely, a correct perspective of the past gives a clear understanding of the present. The fact of the birth of a lowly cat is insignificant by itself. The absence of any record of that insignificant fact need not be a matter of particular attention. But in the beginning of my story, it drew my attention to the general fact that Indians don't celebrate birthdays. This is a fact of profound social significance, although one seldom stops to ponder over it. Yet,

some reflection on this fact opens before one the vast panorama of the history of Indian society from the earliest days of the Empire.

If you believe in God, and therefore in the dogma that everything in the world is providentially ordained, you cannot have such a contemptuous attitude towards life as Hinduism teaches you to have. The supposition of a higher life does not eliminate the contradiction. This life may be lower; yet, according to your own belief, it also is a part of the providential order of things. Therefore, it is as much real as the supposed higher life. Indeed, it is more so, because the higher life does not exist except in fantasy. Ninety-nine per cent of those who believe in it can never tell you what it is like. Even those few who claim to have experienced it, are no better informants about its nature. Nevertheless, to run after the will-o'-the wisp is glorified as the highest ideal of life. Reality is declared to be an illusion, and a fantasy is placed upon the pedestal of reality. How has this happened? Why had things to be placed on their head? These are questions which the history of Indian society must answer. History must be studied and written with the object of finding rational answers to these pertinent questions. The doctrine of special genius begs the question. How did the people of India come to be endowed with this special genius? As a matter of fact, this doctrine, which smacks of the insolence of racial superiority, implies doubt about the godliness of God. Is it not queer that the claim to spiritual superiority should be rested upon such a disrespectful attitude towards God?—Indeed, in a lack of belief in God? Critical reflec-



tion upon any fact of the social life of India reveals such contradictions in the cherished principles and ideals of Hindu culture, and raises a whole host of challenging questions.

Nothing is more detrimental to progress than to take things for granted. Every fact must be explained; every belief must be subjected to criticism; every doctrine must be dissected, to reveal its core of truth. The Hindus don't celebrate birthday, because life has never been worth living for the great majority of them. Only happy events are remembered and celebrated. The belief that life is a bondage is based upon their experience. To them, it has always been an experience which none desires to repeat. It has been an experience of misery. The doctrine that life is an illusion was propounded as the guarantee against any possible desire of the masses to break the bondage. The fable of a higher life was fabricated to deceive them,—to keep them reconciled to the misery of the earthly life in the hope of getting "pie in the sky". You are in bondage, but the bondage itself is an illusion. So, don't bother about it. Be a happy slave—resigned to your slavery.

It is sheer perversity to glorify this view of life as "spiritualist". It is a downright deception. This "spiritualist" philosophy has been the undoing of India. If the conditions of earthly life are matters of indifference, if the pursuit of the ideal of human existence is not determined by those conditions, society loses all incentive to progress. The revolt of the masses against the given conditions of life is the lever of social evolution. In the absence of this fac-

tor of ferment, society stagnates, sinks into degradation, demoralisation and decay. Thanks to the blessed "spiritualist" view of life, Indian society has been stagnating for centuries. The result has been political slavery for nearly a thousand years, economic backwardness, intellectual inertia, and cultural degradation.

The British conquest of India is one of the most puzzling phenomena of history. How could a handful of adventurous merchants, coming from such a great distance, so easily become the masters of such a vast country, and subject teeming millions to ruinous economic exploitation? The familiar Indian answer to this question is utterly unconvincing. Only a critical appreciation of the "spiritualist" view of life, together with its social background and national consequences, enables one to find the correct answer to this baffling question. And the ability to answer the question boldly—the courage to face the facts of history squarely—is the condition for the removal of this shameful blot in the annals of the Indian people.

The lamentable weakness of the nationalist movement is to be traced to the prejudice of the "spiritualist" philosophy. Wedded to this philosophy, the leaders of the nationalist movement are engaged in the impossible feat of reining in the horse, on which they ride to reach their goal. As long as they remain true to their blessed philosophy, they cannot ask the masses to revolt against the miseries of life. On the other hand, the masses themselves still largely languish in the passivity and demoralisation

bred of the "spiritualist" culture. Fatalism paralyses all initiative in them. Prejudice does not permit them to tamper with "*Paramatma's leela*". The superstition about *karma* makes them reconciled to their lot, however intolerable it may be. Respect for authority renders them proof against the spirit of revolt. They have learned the lesson of spiritual freedom taught by the Brahmins. In consequence, they have made a virtue out of their slavery. The Brahmins perform their God-given mission effectively; but their success created social conditions which transformed India into the "White Man's Burden", brought her under the "civilising mission" of the Western merchants.

Hinduism is the ideology of social slavery. Every religion is an instrument for keeping the masses in spiritual darkness, so that they may be more amenable to the rule of the upper classes, so that they obey authority willingly and unquestioningly; so that they accept the inequities of life as ordained by divine justice; so that they remain resigned to the miseries of life as the result of their own sins in previous births and necessary for the purification of their souls; so that they barter away intellectual freedom for the bliss of ignorance; so that they sleep happily in the lulling embrace of faith, undisturbed by the curiosity to know.

In earlier periods of social evolution, when human spirit generally remains on a low level, religion is a social necessity. In those days of spiritual minority, man can think only in terms of religion—explain the phenomena of nature through the assump-

tion of super-natural agencies. But just as the religious mode of thought marks a stage in the process of human development, just so is it a historic necessity that human spirit, in course of time, should outgrow that stage, and learn to think differently. The failure in that respect on the part of any community means that it has not followed a normal course of development and, therefore, its future is bound to be embittered by all sorts of misfortunes until it is violently shaken out of the rut to catch up with the ground lost in the path of progress.

Physically, childhood is inevitably followed by adolescence, and this in its turn by maturity. The physical stages respectively are characterised spiritually by infantile notions, mental restlessness, and stable ideas. In the life history of a community, these spiritual characteristics are religion, rationalism and scientific knowledge. When infantile notions persist in youth, he is suspected of cretinism or imbecility. These are psycho-physical maladies that are treated medically for cure. Infantile notions in a full-grown adult indicate senile decay. Similarly, the absence of rationalist thought—skepticism as against faith, revolt as against tradition, enquiry as against superstition, criticism as against prejudice—in a community with as long a history as the Indian people has, is not a sign of superiority, but the symptom of a disease, the germs of which are bred in the pool of social stagnation. The complete domination of its life by childish religious beliefs, the clouding of its spiritual horizon by antiquated ideas, is the evidence of senile decay. The disease, having been of such a long standing, has worn out the whole psycho-



physical system of the Indian society; it is eating into its very vitals. Cure can be effected only by a daring, radical operation. Decayed glands must be mercilessly eradicated, and extrenuous ones grafted in their place; the blood of vigour must be borrowed from foreign bodies. In plain language, India must either turn her back upon the paralysing tradition of her spiritualist culture, to accept humbly and eagerly her share of the common human heritage, foolishly condemned by her misleaders as "Western civilisation"; or she must be prepared to go down in the struggle of earthly existence with the venerable deception of a higher disembodied "spiritual" life as recompense for the calamity.

The much too belated renaissance will never come as a return of the legendary Golden Age. India can never be free so long as the masses of her people remain deluded by the preposterous notion that spiritual slavery is the highest human virtue. She will never prosper so long as she remains saddled with the misfortune of being guided by pseudo-prophets and false philosophers who preach the pernicious cult of simple life. If simplicity is the ideal, the simpler the life, the better it is. Obeying this sermon, the people of India must stand on the road of life with faces backwards. In pursuit of the false ideal set before them, they must climb farther and farther down in the scale of civilisation until they reach the blessed condition of their arboreal ancestors who lived the simplest possible life.

The first condition for renaissance—material, moral, cultural—is the repudiation of the corroding



cult of simple life. This cult was created as the ideological guarantee for the security of the feudal-patriarchal-sacerdotal social order. Under backward conditions of production, the upper classes can live in idle luxury, only thanks to the uneconomic forms of exploitation which deprive the toiling masses of the entire fruit of their labour over and above what is necessary for their barest existence. Indeed, often the share of the ruling classes (feudal aristocracy and priesthood) not only absorbs the entire surplus product of social labour, but encroaches upon the necessary product as well; that is to say, it cuts into what is necessary for the bare subsistence of the producing masses. The cult of simple life is necessary for a social order in which wealth is distributed most inequitably,—the small upper strata of the ruling class revel in idle luxury, while the masses live under the most primitive conditions.

The grandeur of ancient India, just as that of the Roman Empire or mediaeval Europe, was based upon the poverty of the masses. Simplicity of life is a cardinal principle also of Christianity. It was preached by the priesthood and practised (obligatorily) by the masses throughout the middle-ages. Magnificent temples and expensive religious ceremonies do not evidence piety; they are tokens of vain glory on the part of the ruling class, and monuments to the misery of the masses. The squandering of national wealth on such unproductive purposes necessarily obstructs the economic development of society. Instead of being in circulation and thereby reproducing itself, the greater part of national wealth, representing the unpaid labour of the masses, is converted into heaps

of granite and gold. Such a system means ever increasing exploitation of the masses, which takes the forms of slavery, forced labour, and serfdom; caste system is the peculiar form that slavery was given in India.

The cult of simple life and renunciation of things temporal offers moral and religious justification for the poverty of the masses on which mediaeval society is based. To outgrow economic backwardness and the corresponding low intellectual and cultural level, a people must reject this pernicious cult. Preachers of this cult, be they sincere saints or talkative philosophers, objectively are defenders of mediaeval backwardness. A country cannot develop industrially and prosper commercially beyond the rigid limits set by feudal-patriarchal social relations, so long as the masses of its people remain satisfied with the most primitive conditions of life. An increase in the necessities of material life and removal of moral or religious taboos upon the fulfilment of those necessities provide the incentive for industrial progress and commercial expansion. You cannot lead a nation out of mediaeval backwardness without raising the standard of living of the masses. Therefore, the cult of simple life constitutes a decisive check for Indian renaissance; the "spiritualist" doctrine of renunciation of things temporal is a dead-weight upon the movement which would make of India a modern nation, politically free, economically prosperous and socially progressive.

There is no hope for India unless the masses of her people get over the ridiculous shame to live. Not-

withstanding all spiritualist cant, they love life just as much as any other people. Only tradition and religious dogmas prohibit them to live spontaneously. They forego things temporal not by choice, but under obligation. Life being a night-mare to them, they naturally listen to the suicidal doctrine of running away from it. But the indifference to the amenities of life is not a virtue; it is cultivated hypocrisy. A culture based on hypocrisy is immoral. Hypocrisy corrupts the spirit of man; prejudice precludes intellectual freedom; superstition obstructs moral elevation; it is antagonistic even to honest faith which constitutes the foundation of a spontaneous religious life.

In short, Indians must learn to love life, if they want to be free politically, prosper materially, advance culturally, and elevate themselves morally. Even to-day, they do love life. The accident of being born on the banks of the Ganges or some other muddy stream does not enable people to overcome nature,—to acquire super-natural powers. The love of life is inherent in life itself. Life germinates in love. If it is sinful to love life, God might have arranged the world differently. Why should he create an ocean of sin so that man may have the ordeal of crossing it? Such nonsensical ideas of life, world and God are sacrilegious. Indians do love life; but they do so surreptitiously, with a guilty conscience. The very notion of a higher life is the evidence for the natural love of life. You don't shun life; but reluctantly give up a bad one in the hope of coming in possession of a better one as the recompense. Only those utterly devoid of the critical faculty find this attitude towards

life as actuated by the spirit of renunciation. Indians must learn to love life, not surreptitiously as they do, as they have always done, but with a bold frankness. The way to real spiritual elevation lies in normal social progress. How can you do anything out of life, unless you learn how to live? Suicide is not the way to immortality.

Let the Indian masses taste the joy of life, and their natural love of life will no longer be camouflaged in all sorts of religious superstitions and pseudo-philosophical doctrines. It will bloom openly into real spiritual values. When they will have tasted the joys of life, they will not wish to run away from it as a misfortune, but will welcome it as a blessing. Then, the Western custom of celebrating birthday will also be adopted in India. Meanwhile, it is not, and therefore the story of my life must begin without a date. Don't blame me for this defect; I am the victim of conditions not created by myself.

My parents are too wise to believe in astrology; so, they did not have even my horoscope cast. The belief that the life on earth is influenced by the movements of heavenly bodies is a part of human superstition. Other animals, being free from the habit of metaphysical speculation, do not require this queer faith which results from man's egocentrism glorified as a spiritualist propensity. The absence of faith in our mental make-up, is a sign of our spiritual freedom. We do not require priests and prophets to teach us how we should behave in life, and tell us what terrible things should happen to us if we failed to behave as directed by our self-appointed supe-



riors. Had my parents, for example, been credulous like men, they most probably would have paid some deceitful pandit for the silly service of drawing some mysterious signs on a scroll of paper which should be taken for the forecast of the events of my life. Then, it would be my part to believe that my life was following the path chalked out by the fraudulent priest.

In reality, nothing like that ever happens. Life goes on in its own way, determined, not by the movements of heavenly bodies, which are totally indifferent to the fate of the tiny specks of protoplasm crawling on the surface of a grain of cosmic dust; life goes on, determined by the events of life itself, determined by the events on this mortal earth.

But faith moves mountains; it performs miracles. Having paid the pandit, the believer in the mysteries of astrology does not wish to feel that he has been deceived. He seeks consolation in faith. He simply believes that his whole life has been taken in protection by the gods; that the pandit has honestly and meritoriously earned his fees by securing this precious protection; that the mystic signs and symbols on the musty scroll are the surest guarantee. To be doubly secure in his faith, he has only to call in the pandit occasionally, and pay him the necessary additional fee to have the horoscope interpreted. The veracity of the interpretation is always vouched by faith. Whoever would part with the comfortable feeling that all the gods in heaven are dutifully looking after his or her life? And since all the events of life are divinely ordained, their sequence cannot but be known to the doctors of divinity.

There are other, earthly, reasons why my parents did not have my horoscope cast. Firstly, it is their inability to pay for the services of the priests. The venerable dealers in godly commodities would not be averse to include the animals in their clientele if these were able to buy the benefit. We animals are not ashamed of this inability. It is not poverty. It is richness—spiritual richness. We are not bound by the desire to accumulate earthly goods.

If man really wants to be spiritually free, he must break the chain of property. One enters this world naked, and goes out equally divested of everything. The body is equipped with physical limbs and mental faculties for acquiring whatever is necessary to make life materially comfortable, morally noble, emotionally full and intellectually free. It is sheer perversity to devote these equipments to the forging of the golden chains of property.

The first acquisition of property represents the fall of man from Grace; it is the original sin of Christianity. Life becomes a bondage, as Hinduism preaches it to be, only in a society based upon private property, governed by the principle of ownership, subjected to the system of exploitation of man by man. The Hindu ideal of unattachment to worldly goods is realised only in animal life. It is realised there, because it is not an *ideal*, but the natural mode of living. Naturally, we are not inclined to accumulate worldly goods. We are satisfied with the necessities of existence. Not being attached, we do not require the virtue of attachment to be preached to us. Virtue is something which is preached, but

seldom practised. An ideal is set up in imagination, only to cast a glitter of virtuosity on the practical realities of life. You do not preach temperance to those who have never tasted intoxicating drinks or fumes. It is preached to those who are so much addicted to these as to be unable to do without them. Similarly, the emphasis placed upon the virtue of unattachment only proves the prevalence of the lust for worldly goods. Being unencumbered with the enslaving habit of accumulating worldly goods, my parents naturally are without the wherewithal to pay for the services of the agents of God, and have the horoscope of their offspring cast. That was a blessing in disguise. Because, I do not labour under the prejudice that every small event of my life is predetermined by the whims of the gods. I have the feeling that I am the master of my life.

Another earthly reason why my parents were indifferent to my future, and did not care to possess the key to my life, is that among animals love is not commercialised; it is not corrupted with the sense of ownership. With mankind, children are a kind of material asset. The investment value of the parental care and love for children greatly disappears with the break-up of the joint family. Under the patriarchal system of joint family, still cherished in India as a venerable social institution, parents rear children with the expectation of being recompensated in old age. The relation between parents and children is a sort of a system of old-age insurance. With certain castes, female children are liabilities; but the male issues are proportionately more valuable as assets.

Among animals, offsprings do not possess material value. The purity of parental affection is therefore not spoilt by the sense of ownership. The children are not obliged to pay for parental care. Having no stake, so to say, on the life of their offsprings, animals are not anxious to have the feeling that they know all about the future of their investment. The father's duty ends with his meagre, but essential, contribution for the fertilisation of the egg. Among men, the contribution is no greater. After that act, male animals are utterly unconcerned with the process of propagation they have initiated. They are no more concerned with their embryonic offspring than with its bearer. The two incentives for such concern, felt (more correctly, demonstrated) by would-be fathers among men, are absent among animals. Man's concern for the pregnant mother and for the child in her womb is analogous to the concern of the peasant for the land he has sown and for the crop that he expects. The incentive for the concern comes from the sense of ownership. A hired labourer, for example, does not evince any particular concern for the land he has hired to cultivate or for the crops that would result from his labour. Just as land is appreciated not by itself, but as means of production, just so is the woman valued by the husband. This relation between man and woman finds its crassest expression in the socio-religious law of the Hindus which permits man to take a new wife when the old one fails to bear children. One plot of land failed to bear you the desired fruit; acquire another. The woman is a mere means of production.

Among animals, the relation between the male



and female is not that of ownership. Therefore, the male performs the father's role as a biological function. Like a hired labourer, not possessing the right of ownership in the land, the male animal performs his fatherly function with no attachment for the fruits of his labour. Having no property to transmit, he is not encumbered with the cultivated feeling called paternal instinct.

The female's part in the biological process of reproduction being greater, the mother animal cares for her progeny a little longer than her male partner in the process. Motherly care, however, ends as soon as the young ones are able to shift for themselves. If you want to find the philosophy of Gita—*Nishkam karma*—practised, then, turn your back upon the spiritually minded human beings, and regard reverentially the biological process of propagation among the so-called lower animals. And among men, you shall find the ideal realised precisely in those who do not swear by the Gita, and condemn the philosophy of *Nishkam karma* as a hypocritical cant, and expose the scriptural injunction to do your duty without any expectation of reward, as a part of the ideological super-structure of class domination.

Notwithstanding the fact that, in the biological process of procreation, the male plays a relatively insignificant role, human society, ever since it became "civilised", has conferred upon the father the supreme power over the earthly life of the progeny. Modern "Western" civilisation, so heartily hated, though furtively coveted, by all orthodox Indian patriots, has deprived the father of much of his power

over the children to whose appearance in this world he contributes so very little. Yet, civil law places children, until they attain majority, under paternal power. In backward countries, like India, society still groans under paternal absolutism. Patriarchal tradition, incorporated in the vamping, but venerable system of joint family, fetters individualism, the acceptance of which principle of social philosophy is the ideological condition for (capitalist) economic prosperity coveted by all nationalists including also those who anachronistically idealise feudal-patriarchal social conditions.

The father's power over children is acquired through the ownership of the means of production—biological procreation in this case. The mother is the means of production. Before mankind committed the original sin of beginning the acquisition of private property; before the fall from Grace, not of God, but of the natural freedom of the primitive, spontaneous animal life; before the generation of *Ahamkar* or the birth of *Avidya* (if you prefer Hindu to Christian terminology), matriarchy was the prevalent social system. Woman was not the property of man. She was a free agent, a human being, only more important in the scheme of life by virtue of her greater share in the biological process of procreation. Matriarchy represents the recognition of this greater importance of the female. The female owned herself as the means of biological production; consequently, she was the mentor of the life of her offsprings. Under such conditions, the male has the importance only of a subsidiary instrument of production, and as such, utilised by the sovereign female.

Human society turned its back on the state of primitive freedom—of natural innocence—the moment it deposed the Mother from her queenly throne, transformed her into a chattel, owned by the usurping male. Having voluntarily emerged from the Golden Age of natural freedom, mankind plunged into the dark ages of sacerdotal patriarchal-feudal mediaevalism.

The European people eventually found their way out of the darkness of religious ignorance, patriarchal authority and mediaeval reaction. India is still languishing in the deceptive twilight of the tradition of a dead past. She has not let the past bury its dead, and keeps a skeleton in her cup-board as a treasure of untold value.

I am sure the reader is indignant with my assertion that, in the social organisation of India, women occupy, and have always occupied, the position of chattel. The more indulgent reader must be laughing at my animal ignorance. What can you expect of a cat? The poor beast even does not know that Hinduism worships *Sakti* (Cosmic Energy) in the woman—places her on the pedestal of goddess. Dear me! Don't I know all this? Have I not heard the pleasant legend which keeps the Indian women blind to the reality of their social position, happy in the illusion of being worshipped? But, my deluded sisters, please look at the cow, for the picture of your true position. The cow is also a goddess; she is also worshipped. Why? Because she is an useful animal. The reality of chattel-slavery is hidden in the beautiful (for the aesthetically blind) legend of god-

liness. My dear sisters, you are flattered, so that you may make a virtue of your subjugation to the egoism of man; so that a religion, a civilisation, a social system that degrades the sovereign function of motherhood to the performance of wifely duty—to the obligation of becoming the property of males, not chosen, but forced upon you as your lords and masters—so that such a vicious social system may be glorified as possessed of spiritual peculiarity. You are worshipped as goddesses. Are you? Don't you know that the laws of Manu prescribe that your supreme duty is to satisfy the sexual desire of man, not of your own choice, and bear children for your lords? According to the same scriptural injunction, you must be faithful in your sex-slavery; but your partner can have more than one instrument of sex-satisfaction. The lordly male can possess more than one sexual field to plant his precious seeds, and the helpless wives are obliged to rear that insignificant male contribution up to new human beings who again become the property of the *pater familias*. As privately owned fertile fields, you are kept zealously fenced in. You are not allowed, if you so desire, as most of you perhaps do desire, although you may not admit it, even to yourselves, to welcome desirable guests to graze on the field which naturally belongs to you, but has been usurped by men to whom you are tied by compulsion.

Well, personally I am glad that I came to this world as an animal. I did not originate in the slavery of my mother. In bearing me, my mother did not act as the means of production owned by an egoistic male, but as a free agent performing a func-



tion inherent in her own being. I am proud of my mother; because, in my opinion, she embodies an ideal which should inspire the womankind. She bore children not as a domestic, religious, social or national duty; not out of obligation for a male who, notwithstanding all sloppy sentimentality about love, stood to her in the base relation of ownership; not in deference to any scriptural injunction which places women on the level of the cow, kept to breed children so that the continuity of the ownership of property may be preserved; nor at the insolent behest of some mediaeval autocrat, or of a Mussolini or Hitler of our day, who acquire cannonfodder for wholesale massacre to be enacted for the satisfaction of personal vanity or for the material aggrandisement of the ruling class. I am born of the joy of my mother which was, of course, shared by my father. Whatever parental care I was given, was a spontaneous gift demonstrating the real nobility of parenthood. There was no string attached to it. I have not been launched in this world as an investment. I am not bound by the sense of filial duty—a relic of feudal-patriarchal tradition, performed always with a feeling of gall, though professed with sentimental hypocrisy. Love and duty cannot go hand in hand. Filial love, to be sincere and joyfully felt, must be free from the sense of obligation.

My parents did not usher me in this world as a premeditated act. I am the by-product of the fullness of their life. Therefore, they do not claim any right of ownership over my whole worldly existence. As soon as I was able to take care of myself, I went my own way. Under such circumstances, my parents

naturally were not concerned with my future, and did not have the necessity of imitating man's belief in astrology, so that, for a few coins, a pandit could provide them with the superstitious satisfaction of having the future of their investment mysteriously calculated and entrusted to the care of benevolent gods. For my part, I am glad to be free of the superstitious feeling that the history of my life is already written in mystic symbols on a scroll of paper. Being unaffected by the habit of accumulating worldly goods, I would not be in the position to pay the Pandit from time to time for the satisfaction of having the mystic document interpreted in a way that fitted with the actual happenings of my life which, in reality, are altogether independent of the silly wisdom of the Pandit or the peregrinations of the heavenly bodies.

I presume that the reader would not mind a few remarks generally about astrology. In view of the fact that this ancient superstition is still granted the dignity of science even by the educated in this country, a few words on the subject will not be out of place. Superstition is my *bete noire*. I cannot resist the temptation of running it down whenever I find it. Until the mental horizon of India is cleared of this sinister cloud, the health-giving ray of the sun of knowledge will not shine. The breath of criticism must blow hard till it becomes a veritable tempest dissipating the cloud of venerable superstitions from every part of the mental horizon of India.

Astrology is a creation of human egoism, which places man in the centre of the entire cosmic scheme. This egoism received its death-blow when Coperni-

cus founded heliocentric astronomy. The deposition of the earth from the centre of the Universe logically gave a rude shock to human vanity. It could no longer be maintained "scientifically" that heavenly bodies were created by God to act as the guardian angels of mankind. Since the earth is not the centre of the Universe, the race of biped animals inhabiting its surface could not be regarded as playing the leading role in the cosmic drama.

Hindu astrology, believed in this country even to-day, is yet more antiquated, and never could lay claim to any scientific validity. It is a pure superstition. It is a relic of animism—the religion of the savage. The pseudo-scientific Western astrology pretends to be free of any belief in the super-natural. It maintains that the stars exert physico-chemical influence upon the human beings inhabiting the earth. This notion is silly enough; but the doctrine of Hindu astrology is simply amusing.

According to it, the heavenly bodies (only nine—*Nawagraha*) are not physical bodies; they are gods or demi-gods, two of them (*Rahu*, and *Ketu*) being queer mixtures of god and devil. It is impossible to rationalise Hindu astrology. It cannot be interpreted in terms of modern astronomy. It cannot be argued that the godliness of the *Nawagraha* is a symbolic conception; that they are really physical bodies which exert physico-chemical (or electric, if you wish to be ultra-modern) influence. All such efforts to rationalise Hindu astrology cannot be of any avail, simply because the first step towards a reconciliation with the most rudimentary knowledge of

astronomy will necessitate rejection of the doctrine of *Nawagraha*. And the disappearance of the traditional *Nawagraha* will necessarily mean the end of Hindu astrology.

For, all astrological calculations are made on the basic assumption that the movement and constellations of the nine heavenly bodies influence the life of men. The *Nawagraha* are said to be stars; they are, however, a fantastic medley which includes one star (sun), six planets and two purely imaginary bodies (*Rahu* and *Ketu*)—products of pure superstition. The six planets themselves cannot be identified with the members of the solar system. The moon, for example, is counted as a planet. In reality, it is a satellite of the earth which is a planet. There is no way of ascertaining whether the remaining five coincided with the real planets or were also imaginary bodies. At the very best, only five out of the nine planets enter into the calculations of Hindu astrology.

Granted that the planets do exert some mysterious influence, that cannot be correctly calculated by Hindu astrology, because it leaves out four out of the nine factors involved. If you wish to point out in reply that predictions of Hindu astrology have always turned out to be correct, and that they are so even to-day, you will only prove the power of superstition. The predictions turned out to be correct because none ever suspected that they could be otherwise. This is a case of faith moving the mountain. Those who claim mathematical correctness for astrological calculations, must be constrained to admit that these were all wrong, having been based upon



only about half the factors concerned. Do a bit of clear thinking, free of mystic preoccupation, and the superstitious nature of astrological belief will be palpable.

Astrological calculations are said to be mathematical; on the other hand, in the light of the knowledge of modern astronomy, these calculations could not possibly be mathematically correct. Nevertheless, predictions based upon them turned out to be true! This is a miracle. It cannot be explained otherwise. Remove the element of superstitious faith, and the correctness of the calculations would be revealed to be a myth—a product of wishful thinking. You may be indignant at my revealing the clay-feet of your gods, and casting doubts upon astrology, as the Indian spiritualist is wont to do in respect of scientific knowledge. Should you take such an incredible position, I could do no better than leave you at that, only reminding you of what the devil told Faust:

“Do but despise reason and science,—

“The highest of man’s powers,

“And Thou art mine for sure.”

Modern astronomy and astral physics do not leave astrology a leg to stand upon, even if it were free of animistic superstition. In the light of the vast knowledge of physical science, man appears to be an insignificant, practically negligible, factor in the grand scheme of the Universe. The contemplation of the most rudimentary facts of modern astronomy should put humanity to shame. Man’s home

is one of the smaller of the nine planets constituting the solar system. The centre of this system itself, namely, the sun, is a moderate size star in a galaxy of 100,000 million stars, some of which are millions of times greater than the sun. The observed and hypothetically observable Universe is again composed of 100,000 million such star galaxies.

Look at the staggering picture in another way. According to the famous English astronomer, Sir J. H. Jeans, the number of stars in the entire Universe is approximately equal to the number of the grains of sand in all the sea-shores on earth. The sun is a small one of this vast number of stars, but it is more than a million times larger than the earth. Astronomical distances are so immense that they are calculated in what are called "light-years". One light-year is equal to  $186,000 \times 60 \times 60 \times 24 \times 365$  miles. It represents the distance that a ray of light, covering 186,000 miles per second, travels in one year. The nearest star, other than the sun, is 4.3 light-years away from the earth. That is to say, a ray of light from that star takes so long to reach the earth; the light from the sun takes only eight minutes.

Only shameless vanity can entertain the idea that this gigantic astral organisation was created to watch over the fate of beings crawling on a tiny speck of dirt whose magnitude, in comparison to the Universe, is no larger than one millionth part of a grain of sand! But it is not necessary to measure the absurdity in imagination. It can be more accurately done.

Over the vast cosmic distances, light serves as

the only means of contact among the heavenly bodies. Supposing that stars exercise some mysterious influence on the events of human life, that can be done only through the intermediary of light. But there are only three stars, besides the sun, the light from which can reach the earth within one hundred years, that is within the largest average span of human life. It is thus obvious that practically for all the stars it is physically impossible to exert any influence upon individual lives on the earth. The idea that a person is born under the influence of this or that star appears to be meaningless when it is known that any such influence is a physical impossibility. The light emitted from the nearest star, to influence a particular person at birth, can reach the earth 4.3 light-years after the person is born. In case of practically all the astral bodies, a ray of light, beginning its journey through the interstellar space at the moment of the birth of a terrestrial human being, reaches the earth long after the death of the said individual!

If it is maintained that the influence is exercised not by the stars, but by the planets of the sun, then, astrology is a misnomer. Besides, such an argument would not improve the situation. It may overcome the difficulty of distance, but raises another difficulty of a different sort which is equally insuperable. Even among the planets, the means of communication is light; but they are not luminous bodies, that is to say, they do not emit light. So, they have no means of exerting any influence at a distance.

Now, let us measure man's insignificance in the cosmic scheme from still another angle of vision.

Copernicus dethroned the earth from the centre of the Universe. Later on, Darwin deprived man of the claim to special creation. Even in relation to the tiny speck of cosmic dust, which is its own abode, mankind cannot claim much distinction. A ball of flaming gas, cast out by, or torn out of, the sun, cooled down and condensed into our earth. The process took place over a period of astronomical time which is calculated in billions of years. Then began geological evolution which is estimated to have taken from four hundred to five hundred million years. The first signs of life—tiny specks of primordial slime floating on water—appeared on the surface of the earth about one hundred million years ago: that is to say, the earth itself was lifeless for about four hundred million years. In biological history, which itself covers a small fraction of geological time, the appearance of mankind is an event of yesterday. Only about a million years ago, the ancestors of man left their arboreal home, and began to cultivate the habit of walking on the two hindlegs. Before the birth of the earth and formation of the solar system, the physical Universe, consisting of innumerable stars and vast nebulous masses condensing into heavenly bodies, had existed for trillions and trillions of years—over a stretch of time practically incalculable.

Human vanity, piously clothed in the spiritualist cosmological conception, would perhaps go to the extent of believing that the long processes of astronomical, geological and biological evolution represented the setting of the stage for the appearance of man. It is remarkable how religious people insult their God in the attempt to rationalise faith! To argue



that it took God all these ages to create the world, so that his images on earth could be properly protected, is to deny the godliness of God, namely, his omnipotence. Honest religion, straight-forward faith, requires a real God, the biblical God, for example, or the *Pauranic* gods. Such a god commands faith by his own merit. He does not require a tribe of pseudo-philosophers to apologise for his existence, to rationalise his essence of irrationalism. Reason and faith are strange bed-fellows. If they are coerced to cohabit, the off-spring is a curious hybrid which is neither religion nor philosophy. Science and superstition are equally incompatible; astrology is the bastard born of their illicit love—more correctly speaking, of the violation of science by superstition.

The notion that the long processes of physical and biological evolution took place to set the stage for the appearance of God's special creation, man, is incredible by itself. Nevertheless, it could persist as a prejudice, if the knowledge of the evolution of the physical Universe did not disclose the utter absence of intelligence in the process. Ultimately, modern astronomy and astral physics have come to the conclusion that physical evolution does not as a rule culminate in the appearance of the phenomenon of life. If there is a purpose behind the grand scheme of cosmic evolution, it is not to produce life. Man is not the highest creation of God. Life is an excrescence which soils the majestic harmony of the physical Universe. All the primary bodies composing this grand system are free from the blemish; their fiery purity can never be soiled by it.

Theoretically, life may occur only on the minute

specks of ash, blown out of the flaming heavenly bodies, called planets; and even out of these insignificant components of the Cosmos, only a very small one has fallen into disgrace. It is the earth. It is theoretically excluded that the physico-chemical conditions in which life can originate and evolve into higher and higher forms, will ever be created on six out of the eight remaining members of the solar system. The two exceptions are Mars and Venus. The former seems to have water, though not in an adequate quantity; its atmosphere contains gases necessary for organisms; the temperature also is approximately suitable. But the speculation about the inhabitants of the Mars has not been borne out by recent researches of astral-physics. If the God of War really commands an army of living beings, these are most probably of a very low order, hardly above the botanic level. The present conditions have obtained on the Mars for a long time, most probably as long as in the case of the earth. So, if there was a purpose in biological evolution, and it was the creation of man after the image of God, Mars would be to-day inhabited by a race of human beings. Since it is not, the doctrine of purpose falls to the ground with all the philosophical efforts of Bergson or Lloyd Morgan.

The knowledge regarding the habitability of Venus is still misty as the planet itself. The Grecian goddess of beauty keeps her charm hidden behind a tantalising veil of mystery. Astronomers have been lured to pull aside the veil only to be baffled. However, their curiosity has so far been rewarded with some informations which indicate that

the mysterious member of the solar family is only approaching the physico-chemical stage in which the appearance of life may be a possibility. But here again it remains to be ascertained whether the possible organic evolution on Venus will go to the extent of producing man. Anyhow, from whatever is known, it can be deduced that the appearance of mankind is not a necessary outcome of organic evolution, even those few bits of burned-out ashes which tend to be soiled by the excrescence of matter called life.

On the top of this knowledge of modern astronomy, so very disconcerting for human vanity, now it is further known that planets themselves are rarities in the cosmic scheme. They do not result as a rule from the process of physical evolution. The solar system most probably is the only system of planets. But it is not a normal outcome of astronomical evolution. It has come into being as an accident, and man is the result of that accident. If the Universe is the creation of any God, the creator did not intend to place man in the picture. Mankind has stolen into the providential scheme. The appearance of man, therefore, is not in accord with the Divine Will; it represents a violation of the law of Providence.

This being the case, is it not absurd that man should claim the credit of being the bearer of some divine mission, for the realisation of which the entire scheme of cosmic evolution was conceived? The physical Universe is obviously not the stage set for the appearance of man as the agent or image or the son of God on earth. Therefore, there cannot be any possible connection between the movement of the hea-

venly bodies and the events in the life of the two-legged lumps of protoplasm which crawl on the surface of the earth by a sheer accident. I mean the spiritual connection, which is supposed to be the subject of astrological calculations. Material connection, of course, there is, life being the result of a certain physico-chemical organisation of matter.

Life alone is not a fortuitous phenomenon. The solar system, on a minor member of which life has appeared and attained the high level of manhood, itself originated by an accident. In the authoritative opinion of Sir James H. Jeans, the solar system is a "freak", that is, an exception to the laws of astronomical evolution. Jeans is the founder of the latest and generally accepted theory about the origin of the solar system. The theory is that trillions of years ago, a much larger star passed close by the sun, and pulled out of it a long trail of incandescent gas which eventually broke up into pieces, which in consequence of their rotatory motion, inherited, so to say, from the sun, assumed spherical shapes. The gaseous balls gradually cooled down and condensed to become the planets of our solar system. The evolution of the physical Universe, being governed by strictly deterministic laws, nothing purely accidental can happen. So, it is not altogether excluded that similar happenings that caused the birth of our solar system might take place somewhere and sometime. But the probability against the repetition of such a happening is so great that, for practical purposes, it can be regarded as an impossibility. On the basis of precise mathematical calculations, Jeans has come to the conclusion that, in a period of seven million years,



only about one star in a hundred thousand will approach near enough to another for the birth of a solar system to be possible, and even then, there are odds perhaps of ten to one against a solar system actually being formed. The same authority has estimated that the growth of life is theoretically possible on a thousand million millionth part of the entire physical Universe. It actually exists only on an infinitesimal fraction of the possible portion.

The superstitious nature of the belief in astrology is exposed in the light of these observed facts and experimentally verified theories of modern astronomy and astral-physics. Gods in heaven do not watch over the fate of man. Man is not a marionette dancing on strings pulled by the gods in heaven or planets in their course. No self-respecting human being should picture himself or herself in such a predicament. If you believe in gods in heaven, you must also know that they are too egoistic to bother about the fate of man. They are too busy with their drinking bouts, and *Apsaras*. In between, they have the extra-legal erotic adventures—even with the *guru's* wives. They have their petty intrigues, jealousies and quarrels. Then, they are always being licked by the demons, and chased out of the paradise. Obviously, such a tribe of heavenly beings, if it really existed, would be too preoccupied with their own affairs to bother about others. Besides, man would simply debase himself by entrusting his fate to the care of such a gang of drunkards, profligates, idlers, imbeciles and cowards, as are supposed to populate the den of inequity called the paradise.

If you hitch astrology to the movement of the planets, you must be disappointed to know that most of them that enter your calculation do not really exist, and that the planets existing outside the imagination of the astrologer go in their course utterly indifferent to the fate of the biped animals who soil the surface of one of them.

Now I shall leave this subject with a question: Did you ever put astrology to an empirical test? If it has any scientific validity, it must be able to stand the test, at least approximately. Here is a test you may try.

Taking the earth as a whole, there is one human being born every half a minute, on the average. If a particular "constellation" lasts even for a few minutes (it lasts much longer according to astrology), there must be innumerable groups of several people experiencing identical events throughout life; because those belonging to any particular group are born under the same constellation. It will not be very difficult to ascertain if that is the case. The discovery of a few groups of individuals living identical lives would make a very strong case in support of astrology. The test can be made in a different way—historically. Constellations repeat themselves, according to astrology. So, granted the correctness of astrological predictions, history should be repeating itself to a considerable extent, not once, but many times. There must be a multiplicity of Buddhas, Christs, Mohammeds, Alexanders, Hannibals, Napoleons, so on and so forth. Indeed, history should be a regular repetition of a cliché of certain sets of events, because



according to astrology, there is a limited number of possible constellations. The number of the patterns of human life, therefore, must necessarily be limited by the possible number of constellations. To put astrology to this test, one needs only cast a critical glance over the history of the world. It will be found that history does not repeat itself as it should, if the events of human life were determined by the imaginary constellations of astrology.

Superstition is the greatest obstacle to spiritual progress. Astrology is a superstition. India will not be able to extricate herself from her present position of misery, shame, degradation and demoralisation, unless it ceases to raise superstition on to the high pedestal of spiritual superiority. The conditions for the renaissance of India are revolt against tradition, reason against authority, knowledge against faith. Let the past bury its dead, however illustrious they may have been, and learn a motto of life from the poet Tagore—a poem he wrote before he became a prophet and began to preach mysticism as all prophets always do. But the poet survives the prophet. Let us laugh at the prophet, but learn from the poet. Here is what you can also learn:

“Let us go forward, forward, brothers!”

“To lag behind, is to live for nothing,

“What is the use of living a life which is death?”

